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Predicaments
5 In the Absence of Authority: Going Nativist

The Pekan Komponis Muda was not a competition, but a festival. Nevertheless, the metaphor of a race usefully registers the inevitable comparisons between various participants and scenes, in terms of their ability to realize the festival’s goal of stimulating contemporary art music composition in Indonesia. At the first festival in 1979, Sutanto with his happening and Otto Sidharta with his live electroacoustics were perhaps fastest out of the gate, picking up on international currents of experimentalism. But as the PKM continued over the next decade, it was traditionally-based composers that proved most capable of sustaining a steady pace, while Western-oriented composers seemed to falter. Four out of the seven pieces on the first PKM in 1979 were by traditionally-based composers. They continued to outnumber their Western-oriented peers at subsequent meetings, with the number of Western-oriented participants dwindling to the point that there were none at all at the fifth and seventh meetings in 1984 and 1987.

In this and the following chapter, I analyze the predicament faced by the Western-oriented side of musik kontemporer in terms of the absence of authority. By this I mean the absence of aesthetic authority that was a consequence of the underdeveloped state of Western art music in Indonesia. As we saw in chapter 2, the growth of this musical sphere in the 1950s and 1960s fell short, both quantitatively and qualitatively, of the hopes and expectations of those who strove to advance musical values associated with the European classical canon and
its modernist extensions. Those Western-oriented figures who oversaw the emergence of *musik kontemporer* in the 1970s and 80s fared somewhat better in their similar efforts, but were too small in number to effect a more widespread change in the musical culture. They were unable to reproduce anything close to the setting in which they gained their own authority, and could only do so much for their Western-oriented students, in whom they generally had a lack of faith.

How that younger generation of Western-oriented composers responded to the absence of authority is the subject of the next chapter. This chapter examines the response of those key figures among the senior generation who oversaw the emergence of *musik kontemporer* as a whole. I start by charting the rather remarkable nativist turn on an institutional level represented by the PKM, with a focus on the intellectual background that led to the inclusion of traditionally-based composers in the first place. This is followed by an extended case study of the no less remarkable nativist turn that the direction in the PKM precipitated in its director, Suka Hardjana.

**In Search of Authority: The Pekan Komponis Muda as Nativist Turn**

*Authority Lost and Found*

At the first Pekan Komponis Muda in December of 1979, the future of *musik kontemporer*, in both its Western-oriented and traditionally-based manifestations, seemed bright. Not all of the work demonstrated mastery on the level of execution, but there was no shortage of innovation. On the whole, subsequent editions of the festival lived up to the promise of the first. The emphasis, however, had shifted to traditionally-based composers, in particular those
from ASKI Solo and its sister institution in Bali, ASTI Denpasar. These two scenes were the only ones to be represented consistently, each contributing at least one piece, and sometimes two or even three, to each program.

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<th>Scenes</th>
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<td>Solo Denpasar Jogja Bandung Elsewhere Sub-Total</td>
<td>Jakarta Jogja Bandung Sub-Total</td>
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<td>VIII (1988)</td>
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<td>Totals</td>
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77% 23%

**Figure 1: Participation in the Pekan Komponis Muda, by number of pieces.**

By contrast, the Western-oriented scenes in Jakarta and Jogja—the only Western-oriented scenes of note—faltered. After Franki Raden presented his *musique concrète* composition at the second PKM in 1981, Institut Kesenian Jakarta was represented only every other year, neither by current students nor recent graduates, but instead by a small number of exceptional older figures. Harry Roesli, who participated at the fourth in 1983, studied at IKJ for just one year in 1977 before going to the Rotterdam Conservatory in the Netherlands and then returning to Bandung, the city where he was born and based.1 Marusya Nainggolan, who participated in the sixth in 1985, graduated almost a decade earlier, in 1976, and in the interim had studied at the New South Wales State Conservatorium in Sydney, Australia

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(Hardjana 1986). The most anomalous case—even as the PKM dropped “Muda” from its name in its seventh iteration in 1987, to become simply the Pekan Komponis (Composers Week)—was that of Trisutji Kamal, who participated in the eighth in 1988. Kamal, introduced in earlier chapters, was not a student at all, but rather a peer of Slamet Abdul Sjukur, and at the time a colleague on faculty at IKJ (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1988: 6-9). AMI Jogja was even less well represented, with only two more composers participating after the first PKM: Yoesbar Djaelani at the third in 1982, and by Royke Koapaha at the fourth in 1983 (Hardjana 1986). There were no representatives from either IKJ or AMI Jogja—indeed, no Western-oriented composers at all—at either the fifth in 1984 or the seventh in 1987. 2

Among the traditionally-based scenes, ASKI Solo and ASTI Denpasar dominated because they most vigorously promoted inventiveness in composition—the quality most obviously demanded of composers participating in the PKM. Innovation was not, however, the sole criteria for selection. Behind the explicit call for composers to depart from the conventions of tradition was the equally important expectation that they have some kind of foundation in a tradition to start with. Overall, traditionally-based composers dominated the PKM, creating more than three-quarters of the works presented, because they were believed to be stronger than Western-oriented composers, precisely because of their foundations in tradition. Suka Hardjana, who as director of the PKM was responsible for selecting participants, expressed this view very clearly when I interviewed him in 2004:

So to come back to the question, why is that from tradition stronger? I come up with one conclusion. Whatever you have command of, if you take tradition as your

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2. The sole Western-oriented participant in the PKM with ties to neither IKJ nor AMI Jogja was the pianist and composer Yazeed Djamin, who as detailed in chapter 6 studied in the United States. Besides the pieces he presented at the sixth PKM in 1985, Djamin had practically no involvement with musik kontemporer.
starting point, you can do anything. Tradition is extremely powerful. This is proven by the Pekan Komponis—the best comes from tradition.

Hardjana recognized that any tradition, “including Western tradition,” could be a starting point “as long as you have command of it.”

You have a foundation, in all aspects: technique, reference, musical ability, knowledge and experience. This is only “one step away from the contemporary.” Meaning, if you want to open yourself.

Western-oriented composers did not, in his estimation, have such a foundation—or as he put it, slipping into English, “a fundamental”—and linked this lack to deficiencies in education:

The weakness is those from AMI or ISI Yogyakarta study Western music, but not seriously . . . . Their study is very limited, and doesn't include fundamentals. If they had a fundamental, I would surely be convinced. Because many contemporary musicians in the West take tradition as their starting point as well.

Summing up their situation, he stated “it is very difficult if you enter the world of contemporary music from a world which is not clear” (Suka Hardjana, p.c., 14 September 2004).

Other senior figures and teachers whose own foundations were in Western art music held similar opinions and made similar comparisons. Trisutji Kamal found the works by traditionally-based composers “interesting”—she singled out those from Padang Panjang, and from Solo. But in her estimation the Western-oriented composers had “not yet reached their target.” They were “still searching” or even “imitating” (Trisutji Kamal, p.c., 27 June 2005).

Slamet Abdul Sjukur, who had started teaching at STSI (ASKI) Solo in the master’s level program in creative arts established in 2000—an appointment which itself was a telling indication of the relative strength of the traditionally-based side of musik kontemporer—felt that those “from tradition” were “far stronger than those from ISI Jogja.” The latter were
“floating,” and “lacked depth” (Slamet Abdul Sjukur, p.c., 20 August 2005). 3

The lack of faith in the younger generation of Western-oriented composers on the part of their teachers and seniors is one manifestation of what I am calling an absence of aesthetic authority, an absence that was a consequence of the underdeveloped state of Western art music in Indonesia. These composers lacked aesthetic authority—they were perceived to lack authority, and in some cases felt themselves that they lacked authority—because they lacked a foundation, or as Hardjana put it, a “fundamental.” Their work was considered proof that, on the whole, they were insufficiently qualified to create something that was at once new but also rooted.

Hardjana charged that students at AMI/ISI Jogja did not study Western music “seriously.” The same could be said for those who studied at IKJ. But if they did not study seriously, it was in large part because of the difficulty of doing so, as we saw in chapter 3. Hardjana, Frans Haryadi, and others at IKJ attempted to instill one version of seriousness in their teaching. But composition students gravitated to Sjukur, whose renegade attitudes undercut the authority represented by his colleagues. It most definitely undermined whatever authority IKJ as an institution held for them, as they abandoned their studies without graduating. Suhascarya at AMI/ISI Jogja upheld restrictively high standards, a strategy that did not succeed in producing more conventionally competent composers, according to standards based more squarely in the mainstream of the Western art music tradition than in its experimentalist departures. Instead, it had the effect of squelching compositional activity within ISI and pushing it instead outside its walls—a failure of a more authoritarian authority to impose its outlook.

3. Sjukur clarified, when I asked, that there were no students in ASKI’s graduate program from IKJ.
These teachers did the best they could, but they were faced with circumstances that were less than conducive, and which they could do little to change. They could not make up for the lack of an aesthetically compatible intermediate generation between them and their students, owing to the political and cultural conditions of the 1960s. More importantly, they could not recreate the kind of cultural context in which they had gained their own authority as teachers, composers, and musicians. It was this context, as much as any directed attempt to transfer knowledge or guide the acquisition of skills, that provided them with the experience and frame of reference that fed their own sense of authority, and allowed them to establish a sufficiently deep foundation to be regarded as authoritative.

Just as importantly, they were regarded as having aesthetic authority because the frame of reference was shared. For rather than a simple and concrete quantifiable substance, something that one possesses more or less of in an absolute sense, aesthetic authority, like moral and other forms of authority, is relational and relative, depending crucially on the shared set of values that provides the measure for judging how much authority someone has. Sjukur, Hardjana, and Haryadi had established their authority within the context of the musical circles in Europe in which they studied and worked. In Indonesia, their authority only registered to the extent that it was meaningfully recognized. It was limited by the limited investment, both in terms of number of people invested at all, and the extent to which they were invested, in the aesthetic values of contemporary art music specifically, and the Western art music tradition more broadly. Analogously, the extent to which what they taught was taken by their students as relevant, as contributing to the accumulation of aesthetic authority, was variable, depending as it did on how much specific teachings resonated with a broader frame of reference—or rather, the extent to which students’ frames of reference were
congruent with those of their teachers.

It was the generation of Western-oriented composers who got their start in the 1970s and 1980s who most acutely suffered from the predicament of the absence of authority that I describe here. How they responded to their predicament is the subject of the next chapter. But even before they began composing, this absence of authority had made its mark on the cultural ecology out of which musik kontemporer emerged, and thus was key in shaping the profile that musik kontemporer would assume. The most notable and important effect was the inclusion of the work of traditionally-based composers from the outset in the vehicle that did the most to establish musik kontemporer as a distinct field of musical activity: the Pekan Komponis Muda. How and why this happened is the subject of the remainder of this section.

_Escaping the Polemic between Tradition and Modernity: The Pertemuan Musik 1974_

As can be seen in figure 1 above, the Pekan Komponis Muda quickly turned from representing Western-oriented and traditionally-based composers more or less equally to effectively functioning largely as a showcase for traditionally-based musik kontemporer. That it did so was first acknowledged with some reservation. The opening remarks to the fifth PKM in 1984, in acknowledging that all three of the participating groups “took traditional practice as their point of departure” explained that this “was not intended as a limitation”; they were selected simply because they were the ones who were best prepared (Hardjana 1986: 306). With the seventh, however, the Jakarta Arts Council chose explicitly to “focus the program on new works departing from traditional and regional arts” (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1987: 1).

No less remarkable than this outcome is the fact that the PKM included traditionally-
based work from the outset. The PKM can thus be seen as a nativist turn in music within the official, state-sponsored sphere, echoing similar turns that had occurred at Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM) in the other performing arts. More precisely, it was a realization of a cosmopolitan nativist ideal. This ideal was in part the intellectual legacy of debates in the years before independence regarding the form that Indonesian culture should take, reviewed in chapter 1. At the same time, it was formulated anew by artists and budayawan who were associated with the Manifes Kebudayaan—a cultural manifesto from 1963 promoting the autonomy of art, in reaction to Lekra’s politicization of art—or who had returned from studying abroad, who with the political and cultural shifts following the rise of Suharto’s New Order and the establishment of TIM found themselves assuming positions of greater influence. Charged with overseeing new initiatives to develop the arts in Indonesia, they were faced on a practical level with many of the same questions as their forbears.

When I asked Suka Hardjana, the director of the PKM for its first eight iterations, where the idea for the festival came from, he told me that it “came out of the polemic between tradition and modernity” (p.c., 14 September 2004). In thus characterizing the discussions that took place at TIM and elsewhere—he mentioned Solo, presumably referring to ASKI—he conjured up the Polemik Kebudayaan. Although the Polemik Kebudayaan had occurred some forty years prior, the issues debated then continued to preoccupy Indonesian intellectuals and artists. As Goenawan Mohamad wryly commented in a 1986 article, any mention of the term “the West”—a category with which modernity remained bound—would invariably prompt discussion along lines identical to that of the Polemik Kebudayaan, “as though one were playing a recording from the 1930s” (Mohamad 1994: 51).

The first major discussion concerned with music was the Pertemuan Musik 1974 (Music
Meeting 1974), a three-day conference held in conjunction with the Pesta Seni 1974 (Arts Festival 1974). In previous years, the Jakarta Arts Council (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, DKJ), the administrative body that ran TIM, had organized festivals focused variously on traditional, folk, and contemporary arts. With the Pesta Seni 1974, the DKJ brought these different forms together. They also, for the first time, held conferences addressing the state of different artistic disciplines in Indonesia. The Pertemuan Musik involved twelve presenters among a total of around one-hundred attendees from various Indonesian cities. It began with an examination of “the problem of creativity and adding to the repertoire of Indonesian music,” and continued with discussions of music education and criticism (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1975: 13-170).

In all of these discussions, there was no one with a position exactly analogous to that of Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, who started the Polemik Kebudayaan in 1935 by declaring that the time had come “to direct our eyes towards the West” (Mohamad 1994: 51). The closest was Trisutji Kamal, who asserted that “Western music” had “reached a position of universality,” adding that the term “music” was understood to mean “classical music,” and that when referring to other forms of music, such as “traditional music, jazz music, folk music,” one always added an adjective. She argued that the role of classical music “in the system of education and the life of a modern nation is extremely important,” and called for various efforts to support the growth of “seriosa”—the song genre discussed in chapter 2—beyond vocal music to “all works by Indonesian composers, orchestral as well as vocal”: the formation of a league of Indonesian composers, commissions from institutions such as RRI,

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4. In addition to the three-day Pertemuan Musik, there was a one-day discussion of painting, a two-day conference on dance, and a three-day conference on literature (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1975).
competitions, and performances (Kamal 1975).

Unlike Alisjahbana, Kamal did not accompany her advocacy for that from the West with an attack on the relevance of Indonesian traditions. She was not as forceful. Neither was she as influential, mostly because she was alone in focusing narrowly on Western-oriented art music, even among those who were also professionally committed to Western art music. Binsar Sitompul, a fellow student of Cornel Simanjuntak at St. Xavarius and the author of his biography, and the director of the RRI Chorus, in speaking about music as a reflection of national spirit suggested that gamelan musicians from Java and Bali follow the model of Ensemble Nipponia, a Japanese group that plays “modern works” on “traditional instruments” (Sitompul 1975). Suhascarya, the director of AMI Jogja, revisited the question of instituting a national music, in the context of designing a nation-wide music curriculum. He acknowledged that “diatonic music” was found throughout Indonesia, but did not believe it should necessarily be prioritized over music using “slendro and pelog,” the two scales used in gamelan music (Suhascarya M. A. 1975: 121-122). Frans Haryadi, who as a member of the DKJ was one of the more influential figures at the meeting, spoke of the desirability of educating Indonesian children in both traditional Indonesian and Western musical systems (Haryadi 1975: 90).

Overall, the Pertemuan Musik 1974 demonstrated a remarkable degree of inclusivity. The presenters included not only those involved with Western art music such as Kamal, Sitompul, Suhascarya, and Haryadi; but also those involved with Western-style pop (Samsudin Dajat Hardjakusumah, the manager of the pop group Bimbo) and jazz (Paul Hutabarat); as well as those involved with traditional Indonesian musics, including Humardani, who would become head of ASKI Solo, and I Made Bandem, who would become head of ASTI Denpasar.
Among the points made in the conference’s conclusions was that the diversity in Indonesian musical life—the conclusion pointed to “traditional music, classical Western, Indonesian seriosa, jazz, pop, folk songs, kroncong, hiburan”—was “valued as a positive situation” (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1975: 157-158).

Another conclusion drawn at the Pertemuan Musik 1974 drew special attention to traditional Indonesian musics, asserting that they “would hold an important role in the development of musical life.” The development of new forms in such musics, however, was assumed to be slow. The conference—or the “formulating team” of the conclusions, which included Haryadi—therefore recommended research into “the matter of tradition and the future.” They also recommended that “activity to practice creativity be carried out intensively,” especially among “young musicians,” whose “orientation” in compositional technique “must be broadened.” The use of “Western compositional technique” might “open new perspectives in the world of creating” for those whose starting point was traditional music. Conversely, those who “grow from the Western music tradition” could “bring about an essential reorientation in matters of ‘composition’ in traditional music” (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1975: 158-159).

Providing a Compass for Traditionnally-Based Composition: The Simposium Musik Tradisi

Out of the range of topics and musics discussed at the Pertemuan Musik 1974, it was this question of how to stimulate creative activity in traditional music that became the theme of the following year’s conference on music. The Simposium Musik Tradisi, held in conjunction with Festival Desember 1975, focused specifically on the potential of those working in Javanese, Balinese, and Sundanese gamelan traditions to contribute to new music in
Indonesia. Only two of the presenters had Western-oriented backgrounds: Frans Haryadi, and Soemaryo L.E., the administrator and educator who had pushed for the founding of SMIND in the 1950s, but had subsequently became a champion of traditional music. The other four—Humardani, Nyoman Djayus, Tatang Suryana, and Atik Soepandi—were primarily involved with the traditional performing arts. The two groups did not take opposing sides, but rather worked together to identify commonly held principles that would ideally guide the work of traditionally-based composers. Haryadi and Humardani, finding their perspectives and priorities to be quite compatible, formed an especially strong alliance. Among a mix of presentations that included fairly straightforward and normative overviews of Sundanese and Balinese music by Soepandi and Djayus, it was those of Haryadi and Humardani that stood out for grappling with the challenges facing traditional musics and musicians in the present.

Haryadi’s presentation, as an introduction, was the most general. He acknowledged the dominance of “pop music and entertainment,” in both big cities and “traditional cities” such as Solo and Jogja. He also acknowledged that there were “certain circles that questioned the existence of karawitan, or even all forms of traditional music found in this country,” finding them to be “insufficiently or not at all in keeping with the spirit and dynamism of humanity at present.” In their estimation, traditional music was “not progressive, perhaps even lacking vitality, sterile, ancient, not modern, and so on,” and what was needed was “music that is

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5. Soemaryo L.E. graduated from the police academy in Jakarta in 1941, but also studied violin with J. Schwerin and cello with Nicolai Varvolomeyev (Ensiklopedi Tokoh Kebudayaan, 1:280-285), the latter also the teacher of Amir Pasaribu and a prominent instructor at SMIND. He held various government positions, including head of intelligence, but was mostly concerned with music education. At IKJ he taught Javanese gamelan (Otto Sidharta, p.c., 6 June 2005). Nyak Ina Raseuki, a singer who has worked extensively with Tony Prabowo, described Soemaryo as “the one who was most concerned with traditional music” at IKJ (Nyak Ina Raseuki, p.c., 18 August 2005). It was through him that she learned about ethnomusicology, leading her to complete a PhD at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Raseuki 2009).
new, that departs from the traditions of past ages or that is entirely separate from them.”

Countering this position, which was essentially that of the Western-oriented side of the Polemik Kebudayaan, Haryadi simply asserted that “the reality is that traditional music is alive” and that “in that life is surely contained the seeds of creativity, however small” (Haryadi 1976: 21-23).

Haryadi then proceeded to examine more specific aspects of the problem of stimulating creativity within traditional music. He recognized that exchange between Indonesian and foreign music was inevitable, but argued that for the most part traditional musicians filtered new ideas, and in doing so made them their own. Haryadi also recognized exchange between different regions of Indonesia. He was particularly concerned with the dynamic of exchange between city and village, and the ability of traditional music to endure with the push to modernize village society. While this movement was based on the vitality of the village, the process was “driven by urban society,” even to the point that their “mistakes” invariably became models. Haryadi asserted that it should be questioned whether urban artistic life should always be taken as a model for the life of the arts in the village.

Haryadi did not accept the primacy of urban music, but neither did he believe that traditional music could endure without changing. “The extent of traditional music’s role in the future development of music” depended on “the capacity of the forms of traditional music to develop.” Traditional forms had developed in the past to fulfill specific functions in traditional society such as “customary and religious ceremonies.” Haryadi asked if they had “the capacity to be oriented toward a new social life” and whether they could “respond to the challenges of the new era.” He asked if “the creation of new music” could be “entrusted to traditional music creators”—if they were “ready to face their present environment,” which
“might at first glance appear to be the same,” but in which “the old aesthetic values” had “quietly changed” (ibid.:24-25).

Humardani, in his presentation, focused on “problems” in “the development of Javanese karawitan.” Some of these, such as the low social status of musicians, and the difficulty of earning a living as a musician, were socioeconomic in nature. More significant, in his view, were three “core problems,” all of them “problems of attitude,” present among three contingents of Javanese society. The first was the overly conservative disposition of traditional musicians. A focus on “preservation,” on continuing that from the past, made them “apprehensive” with respect to “changes in instinct.” For them, “what’s been done is already good,’ ‘those who are senior understand better’ and so on.” Humardani characterized this as a “large scale snobbism,” in which that which is “correct,” which “follows the rules” is “equated with beauty.” The second core problem was the “pressure from non-experts” (tekanan awam). From them, there was a “demand for the pleasant” and “the cheerful” that they had become accustomed to hearing at klenengan. What made this a core problem was the fact that among the “non-experts or untrained” were “people that are respected and held in awe” by traditional musicians, such as “officials, the wealthy, or the educated.” The “influence of this group—good or bad—cannot be ignored.” The third core problem was the difficulty in cultivating new artists and appreciators. Because of the “increasing distance of the tradition of karawitan from present experience,” youth were “increasingly unfamiliar with karawitan.” For them, karawitan was becoming “an alien music” (Humardani 1976).

These problems—which Humardani had also identified in the paper he presented three years earlier at the Seminar Kesenian at ASKI Solo in 1972, discussed in the previous chapter—undermined creativity in karawitan in certain respects, but by no means all. The
conservatism of senior musicians was accompanied by a decline in the composition of weightier new pieces in larger forms. Wasitodiningrat, who replaced his father as director of *karawitan* at the Pakualaman palace in Jogia in 1962 (Waridi 2008: 228), conveyed to one of his American students that he was only good enough as a musician to compose *ketawang* and *ladrang* (Barry Drummond, p.c., 29 June 2006)—though he did in fact compose a few smaller-scale *gendhing*. There were, however, no shortage of new compositions in smaller forms, but these were not regarded as a positive or noteworthy development by either Humardani or Haryadi. As we saw in chapter 2, Wasitodiningrat was actually quite prolific as a composer. In many respects his most impressive compositional achievement was *Jaya Manggala Gita*, a large scale suite involving several different types of gamelan. But as Becker notes, this suite was “the impressive herald of a great number of songs . . . in support of the various programs and slogans of the free Indonesian state,” and most of those songs were “undistinguished, written in the style of *dolanan*, children’s songs” (Becker 1980: 49). The only acknowledgement at the Simposium Musik Tradisi to Wasitodiningrat’s work was an indirect and passing reference to one of these songs. Haryadi, in making the point that the modernization of villages was a reality and not merely a slogan, added parenthetically that as a slogan it “had even been put to music” (Haryadi 1976: 24-25), an allusion to Wasitodiningrat’s “Modernisasi Desa” (*desa* = village), composed in 1970 (Salim et al. 2004: 120-124). There was no acknowledgement at all of the even more prolific output of Nartosabdho.

7. See Becker (1980: 55-64) for an extensive analysis of this song.
In so far as Humardani and Haryadi acknowledged the creativity that existed in karawitan—which beyond the composition of new pieces included adding new vocal melodies to existing pieces, or performing them in novel and dynamic new arrangements8—they did so in only the most general of terms, posing it as a counter to the kind of creative activity they would prefer to see. Haryadi maintained that the “elements” that “determined the identity of traditional music”—among those he enumerated were the “slendro and pelog scales with their system of pathet,” a “metrical structure” based on a “binary principle,” and the “heterophonic principle” of inter-part relationships”—were “not obsolete.” But at the same time, in “the creation of new music” such principles should “not fall into fixed patterns,” but “contain possibilities for variation and new treatment” (Haryadi 1976: 26). Haryadi admitted that what he “craved” in new composition was a “creative freedom,” one in which composers were “free to arrange new ideas, free to use or discard old ideas or to use new ones in their place”—though at the same time he imagined there would be musicians who “attempt to continue tradition in its present state” (Haryadi 1976: 25). Humardani was more explicit in his call for gamelan musicians to innovate. Just as “creative artists in past eras . . . broke existing rules and created new ones,” so should young musicians. “As long as it is prohibited to break rules of scale, mode and so on, present-day karawitan is not the result of creativity in the present age, but the result of creativity of past ages” (Humardani 1976: 38).

Once again, the participants of the Simposium Musik Tradisi formulated a set of conclusions. Two of the points had to do with practical matters of improving the “social level

8. See Sutton and Vetter (2006) for an extensive discussion of one of Nartosabdho’s recordings of ladrang “Pangkur.”
of artists” and developing creativity in arts instruction in public schools. Most of the points, however, were philosophical, advancing various attitudes and orientations. Humardani and Haryadi were the primary contributors, with eight of the eleven points based on their thinking (Rustopo 1991: 106-107). Their call for innovation was softened, with one point allowing that new composition could “take the form of a full continuation from traditional music,” or it could be “new” or “completely new.” Two other points reflected their concern regarding the dominance of popular taste: the eighth was an oblique note of caution to avoid “problems which can obstruct the development of traditional music” in efforts to raise appreciation, perhaps responding to the commonly held perspective that the new songs and performance style of figures such as Nartosabdho were helping to attract the interest of youth; while the tenth more directly stated that “Common taste which has great influence on the development of karawitan needs to be channeled to become a positive factor.”

Instead, what most of the points emphasized, whether they came from Humardani and Haryadi or from other participants, was the self-sufficiency of karawitan. The first two points, derived from the discussion, are somewhat cryptic and seemingly self-contradictory. The first stated that comparison with music from other cultures “in the search for new directions in composition” was “absolutely necessary” in terms of “research” (ilmu), but that “familiarity with foreign music” was “not absolutely necessary” in the process of composition. The second similarly asserted that notation was needed in composition, but “in composing artists did not absolutely need notation.” The fourth point was less equivocal, asserting that “at the first level new creation should arise from experience in tradition,” advising that “if the wish is to create something altogether new” to “not simply fall into Western or otherwise foreign traditions.” It concluded that “Western or otherwise foreign
elements which are taken and used at first glance are not considered constructive in the creation of new work” (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1976: 75-76).

The hope of the Simposium Musik Tradisi, identified in the opening speech by Iravati Sudiarso, head of the music committee of the DKJ, was that the principles they identified would “become a compass for creators of new works” (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1976: 17). The extent to which they did so directly was limited, with I Wayan Sadra being perhaps the only traditionally-based composer to independently note the relevance of the Simposium’s conclusions. In a working paper presented at the eighth PKM in 1988 (edited and translated as Sadra 1991), Sadra identified the founding of the DKJ in 1969 as the point when “the creativity of traditional artists began to be discussed in a wider scope,” not merely as a something that occurred within specific regions but as something of national significance. The Simposium Musik Tradisi made this discussion a primary focus, and as such was “an important precursor” to the PKM (Sadra 1991: 19). It secured a place for traditionally-based composers at the PKM.

Haryadi countered the idea that traditional musicians needed “direction” or even a “recipe” for innovation in their creative activities, suggesting that “creative efforts should be pioneered by artists themselves” (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1976: 73). As I argued in chapter 4, composers at ASKI Solo came up with their distinctive compositional approach based on sound exploration not by adopting a pre-existing model, but through their own

9. As noted in chapter 4, Sadra’s introduction to the contemporary art world came through his participation in Sardono’s Dongeng dari Dirah in 1974. As a visual art student and gamelan teacher at IKJ from 1975 to 1978, Sadra also would have been exposed to the ideas circulating at IKJ and TIM, including those discussed at the Simposium Musik Tradisi.

10. In his original paper, and in an earlier research report (Sadra 1986), Sadra quoted the Simposium’s conclusions in their entirety. In the version edited and translated by Jody Diamond, they are recast as a more concise set of questions.
experimentation. These experiments took place, however, under the guidance and spurring of Humardani, who not only carried the “compass” produced at the Simposium Musik Tradisi, but had played a key role in designing it.

Humardani guided young musicians at ASKI Solo toward creating something that was, at least ostensibly, “altogether new,” something that was the result of present rather than past creativity. What they and their traditionally-based peers from other schools such as ASTI Denpasar came up with amply satisfied the expectations and hopes of the budayawan at the DKJ, most relevantly Suka Hardjana, the director of the PKM. They demonstrated, quite handily, that “the creation of new music” could indeed, as Haryadi had asked, be “entrusted to traditional music creators”—that is, as long as they were sufficiently invested in the program that the DKJ sought to advance through the PKM.

The Nativist Turn of Suka Hardjana

The prevalence of traditionally-based composers at an event intended to stimulate creative musical activity, sponsored by the Jakarta Arts Council (DKJ) and held at what was effectively Indonesia’s national arts center, Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM), constituted a significant endorsement of the idea that the traditional musics were a viable point of departure for the development of contemporary forms. With the PKM, music joined the theater and dance scenes at TIM that, as recounted in chapter 3, had started their own nativist turn around the time that TIM was founded in 1968. To be sure, this turn was limited in scope to that particular niche within the cultural ecology of contemporary Indonesia that was centered at TIM. For the most part, Indonesia’s public culture—its popular music, film, and television, which were mostly produced in and disseminated from Jakarta—continued the
xenocentric tendencies evident earlier in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the nativist turn centered at TIM is notable for occurring among a particular cultural and intellectual elite that held positions of authority at Indonesia’s most prestigious official cultural institutions.

The nativist turn represented by the Pekan Komponis Muda had a profound and lasting impact on the profile of _musik kontemporer_ because it was a turn at an institutional level. But at the same time it followed, and also contributed to, the nativist turns of many individuals. The impetus for the turn came from individuals associated with the DKJ, such as Frans Haryadi, and those brought in to contribute their perspectives and advice, such as Gendhon Humardani. The turn was then amplified and gained momentum through the institutional setting in which their discussions took place, and the resources those institutions drew upon to implement their recommendations. On a discursive level, the ideas of individuals had greater weight because of their positions of authority. The ideas themselves gained authority and in turn influenced the thinking of individuals initially and also subsequently involved. Individuals who had not previously demonstrated any nativist tendencies, but who were troubled by the absence of aesthetic authority in the realm of art music in Indonesia, subsequently joined in this nativist turn.

Perhaps the most striking case is none other than the director of the PKM himself, Suka Hardjana. Hardjana went from being as committed and uncompromising a proponent of Western art music as Amir Pasaribu to becoming a champion of traditionally-based composers, and even turned to composing for gamelan and collaborating with gamelan musicians himself. By the time I interviewed him in 2004, he shared with me a well-developed and apparently well-rehearsed exegesis of _musik kontemporer_, the PKM, and the mark he left on both as the PKM’s director. Within it there were, however, traces of opposing
impulses. He admitted to thinking “a bit Western” but also insisted that he was “not a Javanese person that’s very contaminated by European music!” (Suka Hardjana, p.c., 14 September). As we will see, his sense of his cultural identity was rather more complex and conflicted.

**The Dead End of Classical Performance**

Going into my interview with Hardjana, I knew that prior to becoming director of the PKM he had established a career as a classical clarinetist. He spoke little about the details of this prior focus and how he came to it, but did, in response to one question, comment generally on his early experience. When he brought up the sense of identity experienced by modern Indonesian artists, alluding to his own studies in Germany and the USA, I asked if Western art music already seemed like his own before this professional training. “The answer,” he noted, “is very personal.” Growing up in Jogja, his surroundings were “always Javanese.” He watched *wayang, kethoprak, dagelan*,11 and “played gamelan a little bit,” so “physically and culturally, indeed I was Javanese.” But since he was little, his “fantasizing” was “already about the West,” from “the influence of reading, lessons, education, and so on” (ibid.).

The extent to which Hardjana had dedicated himself to Western art music became clear after reviewing earlier biographies, profiles, interviews, and writings. Like Slamet Abdul Sjukur, Frans Haryadi, and other leading figures of his generation, Hardjana spent a substantial period of time abroad. In his case, after studying at SMIND from 1957 to 1962, he went to Germany in 1964 to continue his education at the music academy in Detmold. In 1968 he became principal clarinetist with the symphony orchestra, and an instructor at the

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11. Traditional improvised comedy, either group skits, or by solo comedians.
conservatory, in Bremen. In 1969, while touring with this orchestra in Asia, he met former classmates from SMIND who pressed him to return to Indonesia to help build the classical music scene there. He returned to Indonesia in 1971, and has been based there since, save for a few years studying conducting at Bowling Green State University in Ohio (Mack 2004: 338).  

Back in Indonesia, Hardjana faced greatly diminished opportunities to develop his career as a solo clarinetist. The existing orchestras were “insufficient” in quality, and the leading pianists were too busy. As one commentator noted, Hardjana was “isolated,” a common condition facing artists returning from “advanced” countries. He did not, however, “surrender to frustration.” Instead, he directed his energy toward teaching at IKJ, and into the Ensemble Jakarta (J.B. 1973), a fourteen-member string orchestra that he founded in November of 1971 (Sinar Harapan 1975). The ensemble performed not only in Jakarta, but also toured to other major Indonesian cities, including Jogja, Bandung, Medan, Ujung Pandang and Surabaya. What Hardjana emphasized, however, was “the educational aspect.” “To hell with concerts” he declared, expressing instead a desire to help lead the group to the level of “famous chamber orchestras in Berlin, London, Paris, Tokyo and so on” (J.B. 1973).

When Ensemble Jakarta did perform, its members typically received only “honoraria” (J.B. 1973). For many in the ensemble, the promise of playing at a higher level was not enough to offset the lack of professional compensation. By 1974 the ensemble had shrunk

12. I have not determined when Hardjana studied in Ohio; Mack does not give a precise date, noting only that it was in the 1980s. For some reason dates are especially difficult to pin down for Hardjana. The short biography in Hardjana’s own book on musik kontemporer (Hardjana 2003: 313-314) lists only his date of birth. The dates in an entry in an encyclopedia of cultural figures produced by the Indonesian government (Ensiklopedi Tokoh Kebudayaan 2:121) are incomplete and only partially match those found in Mack.
from an orchestra to a clarinet quintet, as several players resigned, feeling that they “cannot live from this kind of music alone.” Several “fled to nightclubs, restaurants, and other entertainment venues” (Kompas 1976), where they found more lucrative playing opportunities.

The fate of the Ensemble Jakarta fed Hardjana’s frustration with the extent to which popular music dominated the Indonesian music scene. As early as 1972 he complained in an article titled “The Impotence of Music’s Development in Indonesia” how “99% percent of music developments” were “entertainment music, not art music” (musik hiburan, bukan musik seni). “Serious art music” thus resembled “an isolated island in the midst of a mob that has not made friends with it.” Experienced musicians were forced to “popify” themselves “to secure their status and social security.” Popular music dominated “to the point that even RRI administers a national Pop competition (the only music competition at a national level in Indonesia!),” and “even the Jakarta Arts Council” featured in their “music week” the pop stars “Kus Plus and Titiek Puspa.” 13 “We surely cannot imagine or hope that our contests and festivals . . . are all only contests and festivals of pop ‘art’,” he declared, assuming that his readers would find the idea of a “pop painting week,” a “pop dance contest,” and a “pop literature week” absurd and objectionable (Hardjana 1972, in 2004a:11-12). In a 1976 interview, his tone went from incredulous to acrimonious. He complained that the “mass

13. Kus Plus, or Koes Plus, was the successor to Koes Bersaudara, one of several “guitar bands imitating the Everly Brothers, the Beatles and similar groups” that “sprang up” in “the late 1950s and early 60s.” One of the more popular groups of the time, they gained notoriety for having been imprisoned for a month in 1965, due to government officials interpreting President Sukarno’s disparaging comments about “Western popular music and its Indonesian imitations”—which he characterized as “ngak-ngik-ngok” music—as a ban (Yampolsky 2001:[iv]). Titiek Puspa, a singer and songwriter, who also appeared in numerous films, has been hailed as “the most enduring figure in the history of musik hiburan” (Ensiklopedi Musik, s.v. “Puspa, Titiek”).
media” offered more “poison” to the “development of the Indonesian music world” than it did “education and elevation of appreciation for good music” (Angkatan Bersenjata 1976).

The dominance of commercialism remained a prominent theme in a 1980 lecture given by Hardjana on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Jakarta Academy, titled “Problems with Creativity in Present-Day Indonesian Music.” Newspaper articles summarized Hardjana’s talk with the headlines “The Indonesian Music World is Exclusively a World of Commerce” (Kompas 1980: 6), “Our Music is so far Just Entertainment” (Berita Buana 1980), and, perhaps most damning, “Indonesian Music: Naive, Superficial and Anti-Art” (Angkatan Bersenjata 1980). His conclusions were indeed as critical as those of prior years, but there was the beginning of a more considered analysis. He presented the dominance of commercialism as more a symptom of underlying problems that inhibited the development of art music, rather than itself the cause. He opened by asking why it was that genres of “cultured music, ‘art music’” had “not developed at all in Indonesia,” and why it was “only genres of entertainment music” that had “grown so terrifically” (Kompas 1980: 6). He hastened to note that “quantitatively” the “massive development of entertainment . . . was truly encouraging.” But this growth was all “horizontal,” not “vertical,” and had yet to “fulfill the artistic aspirations of music” (Berita Buana 1980: 8).

Hardjana questioned the notion, forwarded by figures such as the author Mochtar Lubis, that Indonesians were by nature artistic. Lubis pointed to the praise for Indonesian coming from Western artists such as Claude Debussy, Antonin Artaud, and Andres Segovia, all of

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14. The Jakarta Academy was an “honorary council of artists/cultural figures . . . whose members are regarded as sesepuh or highly respected individuals within artistic/cultural circles throughout Indonesia” that was responsible for recommending individuals to the Jakarta Arts Council (DKJ), the body the more directly oversaw activities at Taman Ismail Marzuki, such as the PKM (Hill 1993: 247-249, quoting from documents held by TIM).
whom were “bowled over [kagum setengah mati] by Javanese and Balinese gamelan.” Hardjana countered that these were “accomplishments of our forebears,” whereas for “current Indonesian musicians” had produced “a big zero” (ibid.). Musical thought had developed on a local level, where it was “supported by strong and deep traditional roots,” but on a “National” level, Indonesian music “started with Cornel Simanjuntak, and ended with Ismail Marzuki.”

“After that, it’s three cassettes for a buck [kaset seribu tiga]” (Kompas 1980: 4), referring metonymically to the flood of popular music by mention of a technology that did much to facilitate the growth of the Indonesian music industry.

The “most central problem” facing Indonesian music, in Hardjana’s opinion, was in “the realm of creativity” (Berita Buana 1980). Hardjana had, in a 1975 interview, reported being troubled when asked why the Ensemble Jakarta played “many foreign numbers, mostly Western” and “very infrequently pieces by Indonesian composers.” The question came “not only from Indonesians,” but also “from Westerners.” It was not that Hardjana did not want to play Indonesian repertoire, but simply that there were “extremely few compositions.” They had played works by “the late Mochtar Embut,” but “beyond that, one could say we have no other composers” (Sinar Harapan 1975). Hardjana relayed similar exchanges in subsequent interviews. In his 1980 lecture, he recounted being asked by two string quartets from Germany for a score by an Indonesian composer. By that time he was able to offer an arrangement of Ismail Marzuki’s patriotic song “Rayuan Pulau Kelapa” (The Charm of the Isle of Coconuts) by the conductor R. A. J. Soedjasmin. He again suggested the piece to the Japanese Broadcasting Corporation Orchestra when they visited Jakarta. Playing on the title of the song, Hardjana asked, with pointed irony, “is all we have [to offer] coconuts, or charms?” (Berita Buana 1980: 2).
Hardjana’s Enthusiasm for Traditionally-Based Musik Kontemporer

Hardjana declared in his 1980 lecture that Indonesian music “will not grow as long as the realm of creativity is sickly and not resuscitated.” He also asked whether Indonesian music might “draw upon the vitality contained in the values of traditional culture?” The question at that point was no longer entirely hypothetical. The idea that steps needed to be taken to stimulate creative activity in Indonesian music, and that such efforts should involve traditional musicians, had been taken up at the conferences sponsored by the DKJ discussed above. Hardjana, who was not yet a member of the DKJ, but was a fixture at TIM and on the faculty of IKJ, suggested creating a forum for composers. The DKJ agreed, Hardjana was appointed as the “Project Official” (Proyek Ofisial), and the first Pekan Komponis Muda was held in December of 1979 (Suka Hardjana, p.c., 14 September 2004).

From the beginning, the PKM featured traditionally-based composers prominently. And as noted above, they came to dominate to the point that two of the eight events featured only traditionally-based composers. The PKM drew heavily indeed on the vitality of the traditional musical cultures in which those composers were based, and in turn secured the place of composers rooted in those cultures in the emerging field of musik kontemporer. As the PKM’s director, Hardjana thus became one of traditionally-based musik kontemporer’s most important and influential champions.

The extent to which Hardjana anticipated how much traditionally-based composers would contribute when he proposed the idea of the PKM is not clear. There was little in his immediate background to suggest such a turn, though there was some indication of a shift of focus away from Western-oriented music in a reflection, from May of 1979, on meeting Javanese and Balinese musicians, dancers, and painters in the United States. Hardjana
commented on the irony that artists who “in their own country do not receive much attention from their government or society” were “very much respected and admired” abroad. Commenting further on the “strange feedback loop” between experimental American artists “studying from the East” as a means of releasing themselves from the influence of European art, while “we imitate much from America without seeing the interest and connections,” he concluded the article arguing that “if originality and individuality are still part of our feeling of esteem in art . . . we should bow our heads. Only traditional Indonesian arts are more deserving of respect” (Hardjana 1979a, in 2004b:31-32, 35-36).

What is clear is just how enthusiastic Hardjana was for traditionally-based musik kontemporer during, and following, his directorship of the PKM. In the middle of my interview with him in 2004, he proclaimed:

And one thing I want to say to you, in the context of music, the best phenomenon—now I am approaching this qualitatively—what is the best I would say is exactly that which is from tradition. It’s extraordinary. (Suka Hardjana, p.c., 14 September 2004)

This was in contrast with that which was “from the west,” which, as we saw in the beginning of this chapter, Hardjana felt lacked “a fundamental.” In support of this assertion, Hardjana noted how he could “track this through the works at the Pekan Komponis.” Hardjana has left a partial record of his opinions at the time those works were presented in the reviews of the PKM he wrote for the Indonesian press. In these, he did not make such frank comparisons as that in our interview, but his judgement is nonetheless evident.

As director of the PKM, Hardjana could not, and did not, write his reviews as a disinterested observer. He used some of them to argue for the importance of the PKM to Indonesian music, and in these he downplayed evaluation and criticism in the interest of more appreciative and encouraging overviews. A review of the eighth PKM in 1988—the last
before a hiatus of ten years—included as much commentary on contributions from previous meetings as evaluations of pieces presented at that meeting itself, and was more concerned with noting general trends and common purposes within a considerable diversity of work. Hardjana noted how both Suwardi, who elsewhere received his highest praise, and Trisutji Kamal, whom elsewhere he criticized rather severely, engaged in “sound exploration” (Hardjana 1988a, in 2004b:239-240), thus making connections across differences in background and smoothing over judgements of aesthetic value that in other contexts he drew quite sharply.

More often, Hardjana wrote about particular works as if he were offering critical feedback to the composers themselves. This was especially true for work that he felt fell short, which was the case with all of the contributions by Western-oriented composers that he reviewed. Of Otto Sidharta’s “Kemelut,” presented at the first PKM, he commented that his “good idea” of amplifying water sounds “had not yet been exploited maximally.” Similarly, in Kristiyanto Christinus’s “A dan B,” a work for conventional Western instruments, “there was, certainly, an idea,” but Christinus was “overwhelmed with his own reasoning.” Slipping into colloquial Jakartan-Indonesian, he added “Ide sih, banyak . . . ’ngerjain’nya yang susah. Setuju?” (Ideas are plentiful . . . working them up is hard. Don’t you think?) and, as if addressing the two composers directly, “Coba lagi, coba lagi deh!” (Try again, try again eh!) (Hardjana 1979b, in 2004b:42). Hardjana recognized Franki Raden’s electroacoustic composition at the second PKM as a “more determined experiment,” but then also suggested that it was a medium he “seemingly has not yet truly mastered” (Hardjana 1981b, in 2004a:59). He approved of the risks that Yoesbar Djaelani took with his piece at the third PKM in employing “natural” vocal sounds such as “crying, screaming, laughing, groaning,
reading” in a “natural manner” but in a “usage that was not natural (the artificial character of art),” but again suggested that “ideas will stop as ideas if they are not able to come out in a realistic form that can be accepted as truthful.” Djaelani still needed “to search for tactics and work hard” to achieve this (Hardjana [1982?], in 2004b:86).

Hardjana was also at times critical of traditionally-based participants. With them, he did not question their foundational abilities but rather their handling of the challenge to create something new that was the basic premise of the PKM. Most, though by no means all, of those with traditional backgrounds understood this premise to imply significant innovation. Their written statements, collected in a volume edited by Hardjana and published by the DKJ (Hardjana 1986), described how their pieces went beyond existing conventions and sought new possibilities, in the search, as Komang Astita put it, for “a new musical expression different from expressions that already exist” (ibid.:60). They also invariably acknowledged their debt to tradition. How far composers departed from tradition was by no means Hardjana’s only, or even primary, criteria in evaluating their work, but it was something he commented on. In some cases he did so in comparing different composers. Nano Suratno’s contribution to the first PKM made a favorable impression, but it “did not clearly ‘overturn’ the form, arrangement, and stylistic practice of conventional Sundanese karawitan” (Hardjana 1979b, in 2004b:40). Other composers “stepped further from traditional conventions” (Hardjana [1979c?], in 2004a:48). I Wayan Sadra, in his piece for the second PKM, used “traditional Balinese instruments, form, and technique only as an expressive medium,” but otherwise “his [point of] reference was no longer Balinese society, culture, custom or art, but a reflection of whatever he saw, experienced, felt, and perceived,” which Hardjana suggested was perhaps a “contemporary attitude.” His Balinese colleagues Pande
Made Sukerta and I Gusti Bagus Suarsana were “not as radical,” but in their own way dealt with the same matter: “how to step out of the snares of traditional conventions” with “at least one foot” (Hardjana 1981b, in 2004a:58).

Hardjana praised those who did break away from tradition with confidence, but did not demand that everyone do so. He was instead most critical of experimentation that he found gratuitous, ungrounded, or unintegrated. He noted that Djoko Walujo, a composer from Jogja who also participated in the second PKM, seemed “rather reluctant to move too far from tradition,” but also “felt some necessity to tease with [his] experiments.” The result was “not bad,” but somewhat unconvincingly combined that which was “especially Jogjanese, neat, painstaking, a little meticulous, calm, and slow but fetching, sweet, ordered and harmonious” with “a whiff of experiment that at times felt simply tacked on” (Hardjana 1981b, in 2004a:59). In a second review of the same performance, he asked,

Why must one be influenced by flirting with experiments? Is it not the case that between that which is traditional and that which is kontemporer sometimes no bridge is needed at all? (Hardjana 1981c, in 2004b:64-65)

Along similar lines, he commented that the “strange sounds” in the piece that Suwarmin, a composer from Surabaya, presented at the eighth PKM, “had their own issue which was not yet clear” (Hardjana 1988a, in 2004b:239-240). In the one instance of an outright negative review, Hardjana slammed A. Wahyudi Sutrisno, from ASKI Solo, for his offering at the seventh PKM, the simultaneous performance of three pieces, one using only a keprak, a small wooden box used in dance accompaniment, and another in which the players improvise in response to the sounds of the other pieces (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1987: 10). “There is little

15. Berkerling, “glance out of the corner of one’s eye” (Kamus Indonesia Inggris, s.v. “kerling”).
that can be said” about the piece, Hardjana wrote, as it was a “catastrophic image . . . beyond the ability of my sound mind” (Hardjana 1987, in 2004b:213).

When Hardjana felt that traditionally-based composers succeeded in creating something new out of tradition, however, he could be positively effusive. “Rebellion is Necessary,” he declared in his review of the second PKM, entitled “Tradition is Modern.” The four traditionally-based composers at this event—Sadra, Sukerta, Suarsana, and Waluyo—were in agreement on this point, he contended, and in “their extremely conceptual works they have endeavored to reorder the old and eerie face of traditional art’s conventions with new values that are full of possibility.” They showed how tradition could still become a source of creativity with 1001 varieties of riches even up to the highest levels that are the most up to date as well. That is, it turns out that traditional arts are capable of becoming a modern “commodity,” without having to feel awkward in the midst of the hubbub of modern life itself. (Hardjana 1981c, in 2004b:64-65)

Wayan Rai, from ASTI Denpasar, demonstrated in his piece from the third PKM titled “Terompong Beruk,” named after the featured instrument—a type of trompong consisting of keys made of palm trunk or bamboo over coconut shell resonators, that was not played as part of a gamelan ensemble, but on its own “by farmers after they finish working” (Hardjana 1986: 157-164)—that to make something contemporary “it was not always necessary to use the latest tools resulting from modern technology,” but that “it was enough to use tools that he found in rural Bali” (Hardjana [1982?], in 2004b:84-85). Of the “young Solonese priyayi” who had participated in the PKM from the start, Hardjana remarked that “their presentations are always interesting, attractively made, skillful, full of fresh ideas and as a performance almost always complete,” and that “it is not too much to say that they always make an impression as participants who are always successful.” T. Slamet Suparno, A. L. Suwardi,
and Rustopo, who represented ASKI Solo that year, “not only had a mature concept and idea, but also truly mastered the material they wanted to present” (ibid.:88). After the fifth PKM in 1984, he praised Sukerta and Suwardi for being “courageous” (berani), both “in their efforts to create a meaningful distance from their tradition and surroundings” and “because what they do is based on convictions of their own.”

What they do makes us open our eyes, that in fact between tradition and the present age there need not be a separation. That what is old and what is new, what is ancient and what is ultra modern stand at the same point.

Over several pages, Hardjana praises Sukerta’s and Suwardi’s pieces in lavish detail, once again proclaiming that “tradition is modern” (Hardjana 1984c, in 2004b:95-96).

**From Stewardship to Cultural Criticism**

Through taking on the directorship of the PKM, Hardjana shifted his attention away from a singular focus on performance and channeled a good part of his energy toward cultural stewardship. He by no means abandoned his involvement in Indonesia’s classical music scene—after my interview with him in 2004 we shared a taxi as far as the hotel where he was coaching a young conductor at an orchestra rehearsal. But he did cut back significantly on concertizing in the early 1980s—when he was busy with the PKM and became more involved with the DKJ¹⁶—with almost no performances in Indonesia for five years (Hardjana 1984d, in 2004a:128-129).

Alongside—and to some extent predating—this direct involvement in stewardship, Hardjana began to write more frequently for the Indonesian press. As noted above, he

reviewed meetings of the PKM. He also continued to review classical music events, by both foreign and Indonesian artists. Sometimes he would write straightforward critiques, but as often he would use reviews as occasions to educate audiences or to comment on the state of classical music in Indonesia. He wrote several pieces around the visit by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in 1984. Some were informational: one with explanations of the terms symphony, orchestra, and philharmonic, and notes on the history of significant orchestras (Hardjana 1984a, in 2004b); another a biography of the NYPO’s music director, Zubin Mehta (Hardjana 1984e, in 2004b); a third focused on the repertoire presented (Hardjana 1984b, in 2004b). In two others he argued for the importance of orchestral music. The article “Symphony: Symbol of Progress” maintained that metropolitan centers needed to have an orchestra if they were to be respected by their neighbors (Hardjana [1984g?], in 2004a:108). “Symphonies are Expensive” acknowledged that some might question “whether it is right” to spend as much as was spent on the NYPO’s performance “in a country as poor as Indonesia,” but ultimately answered that symphonies “are indeed expensive . . . but necessary.” Their “behavior” is “a barometer of and impetus for the development and progress of music around them,” he asserted—adding that the Orkes Simfoni Jakarta, the one active orchestra in the 1970s and much of the 1980s (chapter 6), “was not yet capable of sustaining this role” (Hardjana [1984f?], in 2004a). In a review of the 1991 visit by an Austrian group to mark the bicentenary of Mozart’s death, Hardjana commented on Jakarta’s lack of an adequate concert hall (Hardjana [1984f?], in 2004a:189). Other articles were more specifically focused on Indonesian classical music institutions. In a 1986 review of the newly founded student orchestra at AMI/ISI Jogia he balanced criticism with appreciation for its existence—alongside a brief history of classical music education in Indonesia—but also
voiced his concern on the lack of opportunities for ISI graduates beyond campus (Hardjana 1986d, in 2004b).

Hardjana thus remained very much concerned with the state of classical music in Indonesia. But it was no longer his sole concern as it had been in the first few years after returning to Indonesia. His active interest in Indonesia’s indigenous musical traditions increased through his directorship of the PKM.17 Expanding his focus in a different direction, he paid more serious attention as a writer and cultural critic to the broader range of Western-oriented musics in Indonesia. In the case of a cluster of articles from 1986 about the RRI Bintang Radio competition (Hardjana [1986f?], in 2004b), *musik seriosa* (Hardjana [1986?e], in 2004a), and the songwriter Ismail Marzuki (Hardjana 1986c, in 2004b), Hardjana wrote about music with some connection to the Western art music tradition—though part of Hardjana’s intent with these articles, as seen in the quotations in chapter 2, was to put *musik seriosa* in perspective as a rather limited form. In other cases, such as a 1988 article written after dangdut superstar Rhoma Irama18 performed at TIM (Hardjana [1988c?], in 2004a), he addressed a topic it is hard to imagine him touching in the 1970s.

In contrast to Hardjana’s earlier statements, in interviews, lectures, and writings, condemning popular music as poison and protesting its dominance of the Indonesian music world, Hardjana’s article on Rhoma Irama is an evenhanded analysis of his position in Indonesian music. Hardjana interprets Irama’s rise in popularity in terms of its broader social,

17. Hardjana’s interest in indigenous musical traditions did not, however, extend much past its intersection with those cultural realms he was most involved in. He championed traditionally-based composers of *musik kontemporer*, and wrote excitedly about the internationalization of gamelan (Hardjana 1986a, in 2004b; 1989, in 2004b), but did not otherwise involve himself in traditional music activity to any substantial extent.
18. On Rhoma Irama’s central importance to dangdut, see Frederick (1982) and Weintraub (2010).
cultural, and historical context, connecting it to the eclipse of radio and LPs by television, recording studios, and stadium concerts, and also to “a shift in the historical direction of the Indonesian nation” and its “whole system of values.” Hardjana comments on Irama’s aesthetic innovations, demonstrating real familiarity with his music through references to several of his songs, but he does so to explain its appeal to its audience. In another article titled “Abad XX, Abad Remaja” (20th Century, Century of the Teenager), Hardjana provided a broader historical perspective on the rise of popular music directed specifically to youth, referring to both Euro-American and Indonesian styles and artists from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s (Hardjana [1988b?], in 2004a).

In all of these cases, and increasingly in much of his writing, Hardjana incorporated a sociological perspective. He remained critically concerned with the possibility of Indonesia supporting the kinds of music to which he was most committed professionally—namely, Western art music, and contemporary art music composition. But rather than simply bemoan particular impediments and shortcomings, he increasingly sought to understand why the Indonesian music world was the way it was, and did so much more sympathetically.

The first instance of Hardjana more closely examining music outside the classical canon had a rather personal motivation. In 1976 he wrote a defense of the violinist and conductor Idris Sardi, whom he knew as a friend since they were little, “from the time we were still on a school bench.” Sardi, Hardjana acknowledged in a later article, was a “milestone in the development of Indonesian kitsch” (Hardjana 1994, in 2004b:382). In the 1960s, Sardi turned from his classical “idol” Jascha Heifetz to “the populist commercial style” of Helmut Zacharias.19 This shift to the “world of entertainment show-biz,” and his subsequent

19. Zackarias studied with his father, a concert violinist, and began performing professionally “at the
pioneering innovations in "Keroncong Beat"—which involved changes to kroncong’s instrumentation to include “winds, electric guitar and drum set” and “mixing musical idioms” including “classical,” “folklore,” and “beat”—provoked abundant scorn from classical, “beat,” jazz, and kroncong musicians alike. It also, however, made him fantastically successful and highly influential. When, in 1976, Sardi was appointed as a guest conductor with the Orkes Simfoni Jakarta (along with Frans Haryadi, Praharyawan Prabowo, and Hardjana himself), to assist in its revival, many were incredulous, accusing Sardi of “lacking education,” of “not knowing harmony, timbre, conducting.” Hardjana dismissed these criticisms as “pseudo intellectual,” baseless, and prejudiced. Sardi was talented, skilled, and extraordinarily hard working. He had been involved in “building Indonesia’s music world” since the 1950s, when at the age of ten, regarded as a “wunderkind” by European musicians, he joined his uncle to work at RRI Jogjakarta. At twelve he was enrolled as an “exceptional student” at SMIND (Hardjana [1976?], in 2004a).

When he was fifteen, however, Sardi’s father died. Sardi dropped out of school to take his father’s place in the Orkes Studio Djakarta, and to take on his role in providing for their family. Sardi’s “fate” denied him “the opportunity to stand [alongside] ‘child prodigies’ like Barenboim, Mehta, Pollini, Previn, Abado, Zuckerman,” to “study in Vienna” and pursue his dream of becoming a classical musician. “Is it his fault,” Hardjana asked, that he was unable “to wrestle further with the violin literature by Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Bruch, Bartók, Paganini, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, Sibelius and so on?” Or that “in Indonesia there was not yet a life for serious music that was able to accommodate a great talent and

age of six.” In his twenties he turned to jazz, recording “some of the first German bop recordings” in 1948, and “in the 1950s . . . became involved in popular dance” (Grove Music Online, s.v. “Zacharias, Helmut,” by Wolfram Knauer, accessed 7 December 2005).
potential?”—that his “tremendous music energy” was instead “channeled through the maniacal style of Helmut Zacharias?” (ibid.)

Hardjana neither denounced nor endorsed the direction Sardi had taken. But beyond the main point of his defense—that Sardi was more than capable of conducting the OSJ, and indeed had accomplished more in refining the ensemble’s sound “in three months” than had his colleague, Adidharma, “in seven years”—he did argue that for “an artist” with “total integrity in his musical profession,” categories were not a “central concern.” It mattered little “whether the music was classical, jazz, pop, kroncong, rock, or even dangdut.” “Only the superficiality of the dull-witted cynically sneers while making stunted musical compartments.” For someone like Sardi, the question was which direction “could support his creative energy” (ibid.).

Five years later, in 1981, Hardjana more directly defended an aesthetic direction related to those pursued by Idris Sardi, in a scathing counter to J. A. Dungga’s complaint about the broadcast of “Bad Music via TVRI.” The music in question was “Orkes Keroncong lengkap,” (lengkap = complete) a standard kroncong ensemble augmented by “a large orchestra similar in arrangement to a symphonic form.” Whereas in the 1950s Dungga and his co-author Liberty Manik’s objected to the orchestration of popular song because it undermined the distinctiveness of true symphonic music,20 in this instance Dungga was concerned with the integrity of kroncong itself, charging that presenting it with orchestral backing was a “defective deviation” from its original form. Hardjana criticized Dungga for overlooking the ample precedent for orchestrated kroncong from the 1950s, and for declaring the expansion of the ensemble to be “a waste of money that musically had absolutely no meaning.”

20. See chapter 2 for a discussion of this earlier critique.
Hardjana rejected Dungga’s perspective as “narrow and naive,” and pointed to other instances of expanding ensembles, including both the innovations of Beethoven, which prepared those of “Bruckner, Berlioz, Wagner” and “Stravinsky,” and that of Balinese gong kebyar, as examples of answering the “needs and demands of creativity.” He further questioned the notion of an original form that was the basis of Dungga’s critique, arguing that kroncong had “experienced many changes” in its history, giving rise to a plethora of recognized sub-genres. Calling on “Lord Dungga” to “not be a tyrant of development,” Hardjana insisted that “development was the right, obligation, and property of all citizens,” and charged that it was inappropriate to criticize a figure like Achmad Soenardi, the conductor responsible for the “bad music” on national television, whose contributions as a “fighter and builder” spanned “three eras of Indonesian music.”

Soenardi, who was a member of the OSJ and Hardjana’s Ensemble Jakarta, was not only “fluent with kroncong music” but broadly experienced. His “efforts to incorporate all those elements he had drawn upon in his experience” were “extremely interesting, without caring whether it was from pop, classical or kroncong itself” (Hardjana [1981d?], in 2004a).

Hardjana demonstrated a tremendous breadth of knowledge of the wider range of Western and Western-oriented Indonesian musics that he discussed in these articles, and in others, such as an appreciation of the leading “Bintang Radio” (radio star) Titiek Puspa (Hardjana n.d.[a], in 2004a), or the articles on jazz that he began writing in the 1990s.

In our interview, he rattled off the names of popular singers such as Doris Day, Connie Francis,

21. By “three eras” Hardjana presumably means the late colonial era, the Japanese occupation and revolution, and the years since independence.

22. Hardjana’s anthologies (2004b; 2004a) include thirteen articles on jazz.
Betty Page, Bing Crosby, Bob Hope and Frank Sinatra with some enthusiasm, declaring, when he discussed at some length “the extraordinary phenomenon” of the spread of American music via radio, that “we all knew American popular song, the songs, the singers, the orchestras” (Suka Hardjana, p.c., 14 September 2004). It seems likely that this Western music, and not just Western art music, was also a stimulus for Hardjana’s youthful “fantasies,” even if it was Western art music that he pursued professionally.

At the same time, Hardjana asserted that when one talks about “Western music” in Indonesia it must be “in quotation marks,” a statement that points to some adherence to the belief that art music is Western music’s most fundamental form. Hardjana made this assertion when discussing the limited extent of Western art music’s presence in Indonesia, in connection with Franki Raden’s claim that musik kontemporer was the result of the meeting of two traditions (Raden 1994: 6). “What Franki says is too much,” Hardjana maintained, asking “which Western music?” Indonesians could relate to certain repertoire from the classical canon, but “late romantic” and “beyond” was “foreign.” The music of Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss “was not played in Indonesia,” and is “still not played.” Western art music only had a presence in “enclaves.” It was not a “big, general phenomenon,” in contrast to the “extraordinary phenomenon” of the spread of American-style popular song that started in the 1930s (Suka Hardjana, p.c., 14 September 2004).

*Modern Music’s “Primordial Flaw”*

Hardjana’s remarks echoed his cultural critique of “modern music,” Hardjana’s term of convenience for those musics that related in one way or another to music of Western origin. This critique found its fullest expression in a substantial 1995 article titled “Notes on
Indonesian Music: The Fragmentation of an Alienated Modern Art” published in the arts journal Kalam (Hardjana 1995). In the sweeping historical overview in the first part of the article—covering everything from the origins of kroncong in the songs of Portuguese sailors, to the craze for various styles of American popular song starting in the 1930s, the “phenomenal” flowering of dangdut in the 1970s, and the emergence of musik kontemporer—it is evident just how much Hardjana’s perspective had broadened. In several important respects, such as his intentionally inclusive use of the term “modern music,” he treats all of the developments he discusses as equal. Nevertheless, Hardjana’s analysis of the problematic state of modern music in Indonesia reflects priorities shaped by his primary involvement in European classical and contemporary art music. Other forms of “modern music” are examined not merely as the background to art music activity, but ultimately the goal projected by the article involves realizing modern music’s potential as art.

As in Hardjana’s previous statements about Indonesian music, the impact of mass media, industrialization, and commercialization figure prominently in this critique. They played a significant role in the second and third of the three “waves” of musical influence from the West he identifies in his historical overview; the first comprised music brought by European traders and colonialists, which, with the exception of church music in certain parts of Indonesia, was intended primarily, or exclusively, for European “consumption” (ibid.:6-7). The second wave consisted of “Americanist culture” (budaya ke-Amerika-an) by way of the “industrial cultural products” that started arriving in the 1930s through radio and film (ibid.:8). The third, starting in the 1970s, was amplified by the “strengthening of the industrial and market influence of the Japanese economy especially in electronic products” (ibid.:11). Hardjana notes how “hotels, restaurants, pubs and bars, radio, cassettes, TV, film,
video, CDs, satellite broadcasting and open fields with the capacity for tens of thousands of listeners, not concert halls, have become the new musical community at the end of the twentieth century” and summarizes the consequences:

Indonesian music quickly sank again in the hurly-burly of global musical civilization dominated by advanced countries with their control of information technologies and capital clout to control the world music market. Musical institutions such as the studio orchestras once found at various government radio stations died one by one. Similarly, institutions of music education and other musical establishments, whether government or private, increasingly lost their bearings because of the speed of change in the productivity of world music. (ibid.:14)

Elaborating on the fate of radio orchestras in a later section focused on developments related to European classical music, Hardjana notes how these orchestras, which “became an organ in the development of musik Seriosa songs and Hiburan in their golden age,” did not all disband, but “since the 1980s were no longer heard from.” They were “crowded out by the speed of popular music’s development” and “lost out in claiming airspace to private commercial radio broadcasts that by simply running cassettes won in the competition for listeners” (ibid.:21).

Hardjana no longer views popular music and the media which it dominated as an wholly negative force, however. Far from charging that it offered mostly poison, as he had in 1976, he points out instances where it was shaped by and interacted with other forces to make a positive contribution. The popular American-style music that in the 1930s began flowing into a colony that was beginning to imagine its independence “carried a fresh liberating breeze that was more egalitarian” and “offered new dreams” for those who “had long been suppressed by colonization.” The “electronic mass media” that carried this music facilitated the move of musical activity from “exclusive” settings to those that were more open and that
promoted social interaction between various groups, including youth (ibid.:8). Hardjana also recognizes in popular music what he considered significant creative advances. The popular music scene of the 1970s was formed by groups that had “a more local nuance,” and were thus widely accepted and managed “to become ‘lords in their own house’.” In contrast to previous periods, when popular groups played selections from a standard repertoire in more or less the same manner, pop groups in the 1970s “played only their own songs,” and developed their own styles (ibid.:11).

There are points where Hardjana seems to be making a cultural imperialist type argument. There are other points where he laments the lack of permanent institutions to “maintain continuity in musical life” of the sort that exist “in the large cities of developed countries” (ibid.:19). But instead of blaming Indonesian music’s perceived deficiencies on the media, or asking with exasperation why only pop had grown so terrifically and only going as far as identifying material shortcomings in suggesting an answer, Hardjana instead sought to identify more fundamental problems. The article opens with a list of five “distinguishing characteristics” that have hampered the development of modern Indonesian music as a whole. First, it derived not from the “heart of the musical culture of Europe, and then also America” but rather from a “thin and unimportant layer.” From this follows the second and third characteristics: that its development has remained dependent on the “current of musical developments occurring in the West,” and thus it has remained marked as borrowed and lacks “a basic concept”. Fourth, with the exception of a few popular forms such as “kroncong or dangdut,” it has only developed among certain urban groups and is thus socially alienated. Fifth, its development has been fragmented rather than continuous (ibid.:5).

Hardjana identifies manifestations of these problematic features in different genres across
the “serious”/“entertainment” divide—a divide he acknowledges in discussing the Western provenance of the particular form it takes in modern music (ibid.:20), but looks past, at times quite explicitly, in most of the article. He groups Amir Pasaribu, Cornel Simanjuntak, and Binsar Sitompul (who identified with art music) and Ismail Marzuki, Iskandar, Kusbini, Syaiful Bachri, and Pasaribu’s nemesis Maladi (who were central players in the mid twentieth century paraclassical and popular mainstream) together as the generation marking the first time that “most figures were composers and songwriters” (pencipta dan penggubah lagu) (ibid.:9). “Musik seriosa, 1950s Bintang Radio-style musik hiburan, choirs, rock, jazz, even pop” are lumped together as forms that developed in cities and were “still felt to be foreign” in the “villages and hinterlands” (pedesaan dan pedalaman) where eighty percent of the Indonesian population lives (ibid.:18). “Classical music, jazz, pop, rock, hiburan, seriosa, musik kontemporer and other genres of modern music in Indonesia” all “rise and sink, ebb and flow, or worse ‘wither on the vine,’ because they exist in the shadows of that which lies outside of their own selves.” Musical trends such as “Hiburan and Seriosa in the 1950s” and “musik kontemporer in the mid 1970s,” like “rock ’n’ roll in the 1960s” and “disco” and “break dance” in the 1980s,” all emerged some years after such forms were “current” and “still hot in their place of origin” (ibid.:22). And in the most striking instance of looking past the “serious”/“entertainment” divide, Hardjana includes “disco, break dance, rap, rock, pop, reggae, metal, country, orchestra, symphony, opera, seriosa, Latin American, etnik, kontemporer, dangdut, vocal groups, jazz, punk, fusion, classical, keroncong beat, tempo dulu” together in a single list, as the categories coming “in and out of the music business

23. See chapter 2 for discussions of these figures and three more ambiguous cases included in Hardjana’s list: R. A. J. Soedjasmin, a conductor of Indonesia’s military orchestra and director of AMI Jogja, and the Lekra affiliated composers Subronto K. Atmodjo and Sudharnoto.
market,” according to quickly changing tastes, just as in “the fashion world” or “beauty salons” (ibid.:13-14).

However, when it comes to examining the most fundamental problem with modern Indonesian music, and suggesting what would be needed to overcome it, Hardjana’s prioritizing of art music becomes evident. The “fragmentation in the development of modern music,” and the fact that it is stuck “in the shadows” of Western music history, is a result of the primordial flaw from the beginning of this music’s introduction to Indonesia several hundred years ago. It was born without roots or a basic concept, in particular because we did not become part of the energy of Renaissance civilization, from which Western music has grown and developed. What then followed were transplanted values that . . . have never been able to stand on their own, with the result that what has developed is fragments of musical trends that are cut off and not connected to each other. (ibid.:23)

Hardjana’s evocation of “Renaissance civilization” signals a certain understanding of Western music’s history, one in which a retroactively constructed pantheon of great composers is tied to a history of great ideas, and linked by a narrative of continuous evolution. It reiterates in different terms the distinction he made at the beginning of the article, between the “heart of the musical culture of Europe” and “America,” and the “thin and unimportant layer” from which modern Indonesian music derives (ibid.:5). The music first brought by Europeans functioned either as “exclusive entertainment for themselves,” in “military and government ceremonies,” for “education,” or in “religious ceremonies.” Of these forms, “church singing” was “singular” in having been known the longest and having “retained its style.” “The rest were social musics with a ceremonial and entertainment character” that “changed their style and fashion continuously following the tendencies popular in their country of origin” (ibid.:7). In other words, the Western music that
accompanied the first four centuries of European presence did not include that which became part of the classical canon, but instead was periclassical: those forms which became peripheral as the classical canon took shape.

Even with later developments in the twentieth century, modern Indonesian music had not escaped the problems deriving from its “primordial flaw.” Because it “depends so much on information outside itself,” it had not progressed as much as one might expect given its 500-year history. And in Hardjana’s opinion, it would only “produce its own essence” (*menciptakan watak dirinya*) when it was able to break the resulting “chain of alienation” and gain a sense of itself (ibid.:17).

By way of illustrating what more self-sufficient forms of modern music look like, Hardjana breaks in the middle of the article from his discussion of music in Indonesia to point at what he considers more successful models from elsewhere. Other than the passing mention of American big bands from the 1940s, all of his examples are from art music: Béla Bartók and Zoltan Kodaly’s development of “national Hungarian music” based on the folk melodies they collected, and parallel developments in other “small European countries” by figures such as Smetana, Dvorak, Sibelius, Grieg, and Granados; “Serious music” from America, by figures such as “Gershwin, Barber, Ives, Copland, Bernstein, Cage” and immigrant European composers such as “Stravinsky, Bartók” and “Hindemith”; the “Five Pioneers of new Russian music, Balakirev, Cecar Cui, Borodin, Mousorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov”; and East Asian composers such as Maki Ishii, Toru Takemitsu, and Isang Yun. All of these examples registered “in the constellation of world music culture because they not only mastered the norms and tools of modern culture . . . but all the more because they are solid cultures known for their strong national character” (ibid.:16-17). A different example, that of “artists and
intellectuals” from countries such as “America, Canada, England, Ireland, Germany, Japan, Australia, New Zealand” who had “successfully developed ‘modern’ karawitan (gamelan) music”—Michael Tenzer and Sekar Jaya, the Berkeley CA based group he formerly led, are noted—demonstrate how, when the “adequate apparatus and methods” are used to transform a “foreign cultural phenomenon,” it can “enrich one’s own culture” (ibid.:17-18).

Hardjana does recognize exceptions to the general condition of modern Indonesia music, which on the whole he characterizes as “a culture without roots . . . whose existence is always dependent on the flow of energy which comes from outside itself,” resulting “in a long-lasting alienation” and the inability to be accepted as “a real part of rural arts and hinterland society.” These exceptions are kroncong, dangdut, and several other “syncretic forms,” including “folk musics that have a local character and that have experienced a meaningfully transformative adaptation in certain regions” (ibid.:18). He points again to kroncong and dangdut in concluding the article, noting that they “have an advantage” as forms existing “only in this country” that are “the result of cleverness in giving birth to a new syncretic culture from other cultures that are creatively adopted.” In his final sentence, he suggests that they stand alongside “Borobudur, wayang, karawitan, pinisi, and so on”24 as a “small contribution that is extremely meaningful in the invention of our true selves” (penemuan jati diri) (ibid.:23).

Hardjana thus recognizes the cultural significance of kroncong and dangdut, the latter of which is justifiably called “Indonesia’s most popular music” (Weintraub 2010). But in referring to them as a “small contribution,” he also indicates that they do not fully address the

24. Borobudur, the world’s largest Buddhist monument, is located near Jogyakarta. Pinisi is a type of a cargo boat developed by the Bugis, an ethnic group from coastal South Sulawesi.
problematic condition of modern Indonesian music. The other critical characteristic of the
non-Indonesian examples Hardjana points to as models of self-sufficiency is that they
“embrace” music “not only in its capacity as an object for entertainment, but they are truly
aware of its standards and essence as part of humanity’s history which provides prestige and
higher self-worth for a people” (ibid.:17). The implication here is that only with the
development of “serious” forms, of art music, music that fulfills “the artistic aspirations of
music,” as he put it in 1980, can the alienation and fragmentation suffered by modern
Indonesian music be counteracted fully. Hardjana consistently places “serious” in scare
quotes, and he doesn’t use the term musik seni (art music) at all, but it is nevertheless clear
that his avoidance, intentional or otherwise, of such categorical terms does not imply a lack of
investment in the ideals they represent.

Hardjana also asserts that

Modern Indonesian music will never become a part of the dialogue of world musical
culture and will constantly depend on designs already established outside itself, as
long as it fails to draw historical lessons from within itself (ibid.:17).

Which lessons Hardjana refers to here is not entirely clear. The history of modern Indonesian
music that Hardjana outlines is one of continuous and problematic dependency on outside
models. Syncretic forms such as kroncong and dangdut avoid that specific problem, but are
otherwise insufficient in “building a sense of identity” that is “full of character and authority”
(ibid.:14). For that, Hardjana looks to examples from other parts of the world.

That the first of these is Bartók and Kodaly’s development of a national Hungarian music

25. In discussing the emergence of the distinction between “serious art” and “entertainment art” in the
first half of the twentieth century, Hardjana even uses letters to stand in for the terms used in different
languages: “E” for “Ernst” and “U” for “Unterhaltung,” “S” for “Serious” and “E” for
“Entertainment,” “S” for “Seriosa” and “H” for “Hiburan” (Hardjana 1995:20).
based on folk melodies—which, he notes, became “one of the most influential ideas in the development of twentieth century modern music in the world” (ibid.:15)—suggests that modern Indonesian music might also look to traditional Indonesian music. Hardjana acknowledges briefly the pioneering efforts of the PKM to “bring to life new experimental musical works having their point of departure in various musical disciplines” as a “forum” that “promised much new hope . . . for the future growth of modern music.” But the PKM “was stopped just like that”—discontinued when funding for it dried up—and subsequent activities of a similar sort “have not yet displayed a clear form” (ibid.:22).

The failed promise of musik kontemporer is most directly a matter of insufficient institutional support and a resulting lack of continuity. More fundamentally, it has to do with its limited broader significance. The PKM successfully established musik kontemporer as a field encompassing Western-oriented and traditionally-based work on equal terms, but this accomplishment had a negligible impact on the broader sphere of music in Indonesia. In his reviews of the PKM, Hardjana had proclaimed that “tradition is modern,” arguing that at least some traditionally-based composers had successfully transcended the traditional/modern dichotomy. But as a cultural critic, Hardjana had to acknowledge the ongoing persistence of this dichotomy beyond the rarefied context of the PKM. For want of an alternative, Hardjana uses the term “modern” to designate what in effect remains a musical realm all but entirely distinct from “various traditional music, folk music and regional musics whose historical development and socio-cultural background have their own story” (ibid.:5), as he explains in a note at the beginning of his article. These musics figure hardly at all otherwise, except implicitly in his acknowledgement of the advantages of a syncretic form such as kroncong, and briefly as one point of comparison in his conclusion where he states that “unlike the
historical development of music in the West, or the historical development of our traditional arts, the development of modern Indonesian music . . . is not the history of humanity, but the history of people’s taste” (ibid.:23).

In his own artistic pursuits, however, Hardjana was, first through his directorship of the PKM, and later in his own forays as a composer, increasingly looking to traditional Indonesian music as a means to escape the predicament of Western-oriented modern Indonesian music. But as we will see in the next and last section in the profile of this centrally important figure in musik kontemporer, coming to traditional music after having been so Western-oriented for so much of his career turned out to be somewhat fraught itself.

**Nativism by Proxy**

Hardjana opened one of two reviews he wrote of the fifth PKM in 1984—the first at which all the participants had traditional foundations—with a rather dramatic account of the impact those participants had:

> In the middle of the bright lights and noise of the big city Jakarta, young kids from the outlying regions arrive with all their simplicity and honesty. Yet their enthusiasm and thinking are as brilliant as those bright lights. They come bringing a wealth of lessons for the dim-witted inhabitants of the big city . . . They are a small slice of Indonesian humanity who are still sturdy enough to face the influence of modernization that is a cause of anxiety. And they propose to us that one’s surroundings, tradition, and self-certainty are the most potent protection to face all of that. (Hardjana 1984c, in 2004b:90-91)

On a certain level, the variation on the primitivist trope of the over-civilized and alienated learning from simpler and more honest folk functions rhetorically, setting up a dichotomy that Hardjana can then strike down in praising the sophistication of the traditionally-based composers he has invited to participate. But on another level, Hardjana’s comments hint at
the critique of Western-oriented modern Indonesian music he articulated in a more developed form eleven years later, in the 1995 article discussed above. In referring to the “dim-witted inhabitants of the big city,” he would seem to be speaking less of himself, or of Western-oriented Jakarta-based composers and musicians in particular, but more generally of urban Indonesians as a whole. But in retrospect, his later comments and activities suggest that Hardjana was himself looking increasingly to traditional music as a more grounded source for new musical directions.

When I interviewed Hardjana in 2004, he revealed a somewhat more actively curatorial dimension to his work as director of the PKM. He did not simply issue open-ended invitations to participants to present their work, but at least on some occasions he effectively commissioned them with more or less specific criteria. In some cases, there were practical motivations, as in 1983 when a currency devaluation caused the PKM’s budget to be “cut in half.” Hardjana used this as an opportunity to promote the idea of chamber music, and the development of “instrumental technique” and “an individual approach” that he understood to be an essential aspect of that form.\(^\text{26}\) In other cases his requests were more idiosyncratic, such as when he asked Blacius Subono to compose only for pencon (knobbed gongs).\(^\text{27}\) He recounted how after being struck by the contrapuntal character of gender wayang played at a wayang performance in Teges, Bali, he asked I Wayan Suweca and Ketut Suryatini to develop this aspect, leading to their piece “Irama Hidup” for ten gender wayang for the seventh PKM in 1987 (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1987: 14). In this case, he encouraged the

\(^{26}\) Alec Roth noted that for the fourth PKM in 1983, because of “financial constraints” participating ensembles were limited to no more than nine musicians (Roth 1987: 138).

\(^{27}\) “Owah-owah (Sworo Pencon),” co-composed by Subono and Santosa for the fourth PKM in 1983, featured pencon, but also included vocals, suling, and gender (Hardjana 1986: 252).
composers to approach a traditional form with chamber music proportions28 “in terms of a large orchestra.”

Hardjana spoke also of presenting composers with the mission of finding solutions to what he considered “interesting problems” with karawitan. “I chose my victims, I gave them my problem, according to my fantasizing.” For example, there was the problem of the inaudibility of Javanese gender that he posed to A. L. Suwardi. The gender, Hardjana gushed, was a remarkably beautiful instrument. “Even just a single note”—he said as he walked across the room in his house where we were speaking and struck a key on the instrument in the gamelan he had acquired “for his compositional interests”—“ah, it’s beautiful.” When it was played, it was “fantastic—a kind of narcissistic music. A paradise of sound—a paradise of sound imagination.” Yet in the context of a full gamelan ensemble, “it could not be heard.” This is not to say it was insignificant to the overall sound—Hardjana likened it to ingredients that subtly affected the flavor of certain foods, like gudangan (a mixed vegetable salad with a dressing of seasoned grated coconut) or rujak (a fruit salad with a pungent dressing). Hardjana told Suwardi he didn’t want “Javanese gamelan”; he wasn’t asking him to alter gamelan, which was “already perfect.” Instead, in asking Suwardi if he could find a way to “make the gender audible,” he made it clear that he was asking him to “pull the gender out from the gendhing besar”—the “great gendhing.” Hardjana’s formulation referring to the traditional practice of Javanese karawitan. A key part of Suwardi’s solution, presented in his piece “Gender” at the fourth PKM in 1983, was to adapt to the gender the rotating vane mechanism from a vibraphone.

28. Gender wayang are typically played as a pair, or a quartet, with the second higher register pair doubling the first. In accompanying Ramayana stories, additional percussion instruments are part of the ensemble.
Hardjana remarked that although he is “Javanese also,” “really the gamelan is A. L. Suwardi’s business, not mine.” In pushing Suwardi to innovate, Hardjana only came up with the “trigger.” By the mid 1990s, however, Hardjana had begun to make gamelan more his business, with a lengthy gamelan composition entitled *Bulan Tertusuk Ilalang*. The work, which Hardjana termed a *gendhing film* grew out of, and took its title from, a collaboration with the groundbreaking and award-winning independent filmmaker Garin Nugroho.\(^{29}\) Nugroho, whose previous feature film had crossed the boundaries of ethnographic and narrative film, embarked on a different kind of experiment in this collaboration with Hardjana. He agreed that Hardjana would compose the music first, and then Nugroho would shoot and edit the film, reversing the typical order of operations as well as the usual hierarchy in which music plays a subordinate and supporting role. The two had worked together on the scenario, which the music was intended to depict as much as other aspects of the film, and the dialogue was revised several times. In the end, however, Hardjana felt that the “visualization” had deviated too much from the agreed-upon scenario, and refused to allow his music to be used. But having conceived of the music as a work that could stand on its own, that was more than mere “illustration,” Hardjana presented the ninety minute work as a concert piece, as part of a seven city tour that also included a lecture and a solo clarinet recital (Pos 1995).\(^{30}\)

Three years later, in 1998, Hardjana revised and retitled the work *Wulan* (the Javanese equivalent of the Indonesian *bulan* = moon). Now around an hour long, the piece was presented at the second Art Summit Indonesia—an international contemporary performing

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29. For critical reflections on Garin Nugroho and his work, see Cheah et al. (2004)
30. The month-long tour, intended as a retrospective of his forty year career in music, took Hardjana to Jakarta, Bandung, Semarang, Jogja, Solo, Surabaya, and Denpasar.
arts festival held every three years in Jakarta and the most prestigious event of its kind in Indonesia—along with a second and very different composition for gamelan, entitled Bamban. Based on a “new concept” termed “Anti Parametrical Aesthetic,” the bulk of that forty to fifty minute piece involved non-traditional techniques and arrangements as a “deconstruction” of those “artificial sounds” that came to be “entrenched” as “music,” as “culture.”

Elaborating in his program notes on the literal meaning of the Javanese word bamban as “returning to the starting point,” Hardjana writes of the usefulness of “returning to our initial stage” when “a process reaches a deadlock.” Bamban is “a necessary action” in response to “meeting a dead end,” not with the idea of a return to some point of origin, but to find a different path—perhaps also a dead end, but one that is “more interesting” and that “offers hope” (Hardjana 1998c:52).

The impasse Hardjana alludes to would seem to be his unsettled sense of identity, a sense he became more acutely aware of through the process that began with Wulan. In an interview around the time of his 1995 tour, Hardjana explained that he was motivated to compose for gamelan because “as a Javanese person I feel closest to that art which is my mother culture” (induk kebudayaan saya)—that despite having mastered “Western classical [music]” he “still

31. The Indonesian composers that have appeared over the years—Rahayu Supanggah and Slamet Abdul Sjukur at the first in 1995; Tony Prabowo along with Suka Hardjana in 1998; I Nyoman Windha and A. L. Suwardi in 2001; I Wayan Sadra in 2004—represent the favored status of those based in Jakarta and Solo, and, with the inclusion of Windha from ISI Denpasar, the legacy of a network that grew out of the PKM. Windha participated in the eighth Pekan Komponis in 1988. The Art Summit has also featured non-Indonesian participants of considerable stature; the 1998 event included the composers Kaija Saariaho and Alvin Lucier.

32. Bamban begins with the performers positioned throughout and surrounding the concert hall playing gong, kempul (small knobbled gongs) and bendhe (flat gongs), some of them stationary, some of them moving. The notation for an approximately ten minute section in the middle uses graphic symbols to indicate only what techniques should be on different instruments, with the rebab player asked to play on and beneath the bridge. I obtained a copy of the score from Rusdiyantoro, the director of Ensemble Kentingan, the group from ASKI (STSI) Solo that realized the piece.
had a spiritual connection” with Javanese music, even though, as he admitted, he was unable to play it (Asri and Susanto 1995). In 1998, he spoke to the press of “going home to my neighborhood/village” (pulang kampung) (Kompas 1998), and in the program for the Art Summit performance of both Wulan and Bamban as a “pilgrimage to my cultural point of origin (ziarah ke induk budaya asal-usul): Java” (Hardjana 1998c:52).

With Wulan, this return mostly took a more literal form. The work consists largely of “ancient melodies in a new arrangement” and “new melodies with a traditional approach,” mixed with some “total departures from tradition,” from that which is “proper” (baik dan benar) (Suara Pembaruan 1998). These departures aside, the work gives the impression of being straightforwardly traditional, with pieces from the standard karawitan repertoire presented whole. Yet at the same time, the traditional (and neo-traditional) material invariably involves departures from conventional practice. In some cases these departures are obvious, such as the opening section which uses the trademark ASKI Solo device of superimposing rhythmically independent elements: a pesindhen singing the melodies of sendhon “Rencasih” and pathethan sanga ngelik, both of which are most commonly performed in the context of wayang by a dhalang, accompanied by rebab, gender, gambang, and suling; a two-part male chorus; a melody reminiscent of the long introduction played by bonang in gamelan sekaten; and the soft tinkling of a gender panerus, the only element in

33. My discussion is based primarily on a studio recording of the piece obtained from Rusdiyantoro, who as noted below directed the ensemble that played it, and to some extent collaborated in its creation.

34. Gamelan sekaten is a form with larger and lower pitched bronze instruments, without vocals or other kinds of instruments except bedhug, a very large low-pitched drum, that is believed to have been created by the Islamic saints who converted the Javanese to Islam in the 15th and 16th centuries. In Solo and Jogja, it is now played exclusively as part of the sekaten festival held in the month of Mulud to celebrate the birth of the prophet Muhammad. ASKI Solo had its own set of instruments built for study and for use in new compositions.
In other cases, they are very subtle, such as a performance of ladrang “Asmaradana” in which the gamelan is reduced to jineman-style instrumentation (kendhang, soft-sounding and structure-marking instruments, but no rebab)\textsuperscript{35} and with the pesindhen either humming or singing without words. There are also idiosyncratic moments, such as an erratic solo played by gender panerus that in the notation is indicated simply by the title “Awur-awur I,”\textsuperscript{36} and more conspicuously avant-garde passages, such as a six-and-a-half minute section for multiple rebab that starts with consonant held-tones, moves into a swarm, and then ebbs and flows in intensity with more frenetic bowing and tremolos. In the three-and-a-half minute section that follows, Hardjana has a male chorus sustain a multi-pitched drone on the syllable “aum” while a pesindhen sings sendhon “Abimanyu”—another melody from the wayang repertoire—and a gender panerus again tinkling in the background.

Because, as Hardjana admitted, he cannot himself play gamelan, he relied extensively on the expertise of the musicians with whom he worked. Exactly how much is not clear. Rusdiyantoro, who is credited in the Art Summit program as the director of Ensemble Kentingan, the group from STSI (ASKI) Solo that performed both the initial version of Bulan Tertusuk Ilalang and Wulan, noted that although Hardjana refers to it as his work, in truth it was a collaboration. I recognized the notation for the piece as being in Rusdiyantoro’s meticulous hand.\textsuperscript{37} Rather than a complete score—it lacks even a title or attribution—it

\begin{quote}
35. Jineman are light and small-scale pieces featuring a melody sung by a pesindhen. Ladrang “Asmaradana” tends in contemporary performance practice to be considered a gendhing populer, and would be played in a very lively manner by a full gamelan ensemble. See Sutton (2006) for a discussion of a typical performance of ladrang “Pangkur,” a similar piece, by Nartosadho’s ensemble.

36. The related verb form of awur, ngawur, is used pejoratively among gamelan musicians to describe making things up, especially when this is due to insufficient knowledge.

37. I was very familiar with Rusdiyantoro’s notation, having lived with him in Vancouver in 1992, and having studied with him at Simon Fraser University, where he was a visiting instructor. He spent
includes only that which is necessary to facilitate rehearsal and performance. Detailed notation is provided only when players need to coordinate their parts, as in the case of the two-part male chorus in the opening, or where the text is non-standard, as with the sendhon “Rencasih” and pathethan sanga ngelik in that same section. For most sections all that is provided is a title, and in some cases reminders about techniques, variations, or instrumentation. This is true both for traditional sections such as “Asmaradana, slendro sanga” (where the laras and pathet are indicated because these differ from those that are usual), and non-traditional ones such as “Awur-awur I” and the lengthy section for multiple rebab—which is represented simply by the title “Geometri,” the letters “A,” “B,” and “C” as a reference to subsections, and two lines beside C, which seem to indicate the point at which the rebab play a fast tremolo while glissing either up or down, and then converge again with longer bow strokes.

Whether Hardjana specified all the traditional material or asked Rusdiyantoro or other players to suggest suitable pieces, he undoubtedly would have left the realization of those pieces to the players—as is done both in traditional performance practice and in most pieces of musik kontemporer—though the variations in instrumentation seem idiosyncratic enough that I would assume they were specified by Hardjana. There is a section with multiple siter playing a balungan in unison that is notated, which is presumably one of Hardjana’s new melodies. The drone on the syllable “aum” required considerable stamina on the part of the male singers—to the point that, according to Rusdiyantoro, one of them joked that he would

many an evening carefully preparing notation.

38. There are three pathet (modes) in each of the two laras (tuning systems), slendro and pelog, used in Central Javanese karawitan. A number of pieces, including ladrang “Asmaradana,” may be played in different laras, and some may be played in different pathet as well. Ladrang “Asmaradana” is most commonly played in slendro manyura and pelog barang.
“rather die than have to sing that again” (Rusdiyantoro, p.c., 9 August 2005)—and thus would seem to be an imposition of compositional authority beyond that typical of the creative processes I have observed or participated in at ASKI. Rusdiyantoro commented that the “technique” in the section for multiple rebab was “also difficult,” again pointing to Hardjana’s direction. But he also noted that in the end, his improvisation was included, indicating that Hardjana relied on the player’s creative input. However the balance of creative responsibility is weighed, the style and overall conception of Wulan is quite unlike that of the various types of composition practiced at ASKI, suggesting that the overall artistic vision for the piece, if not every detail, was determined by Hardjana.39

In speaking with the press in advance of the 1998 Art Summit Performance of Wulan, Hardjana remarked that “looking at himself” he was “only able to sit at the threshold (tritisan) of the house of Javanese culture.” He remained “on the edge” in part because he had “not mastered the skill of gamelan,” but “most of all out of respect.” “I only look around, unsure of what to do (longak-longok) and comment . . . My works are part of my way of commenting.” Hardjana was thus somewhat discomfited by his lack of practical knowledge of karawitan. But even more than this lack, what troubled him was the knowledge and outlook that he had acquired from being “in the fantasy of Western musical culture” (angan-angan budaya musik Barat) since his youth. “It’s like I’m wearing borrowed clothes. [They’re] good, but still borrowed.” So he “diligently occupied” himself with “gamelan

39. Overall, Wulan moves at a much statelier pace than either ASKI-style musik kontemperor, or other more outwardly traditional forms such as penataan. In the latter, apparently introduced by Sri Hastanto in the 1980s as another graduating project option for ASKI students (Roth 1987:218; Sukamso, p.c., 4 August 2004), fragments of traditional repertoire are patched together in new arrangements. Senior performance faculty, such as Mloywododo and Martopangrawit, disliked the form, much more than musik kontemperor, for the way it would switch from a fragment of one piece to another. See Sutrisno (1998) for an enthusiastic account of the form by a practitioner.
culture,” citing his involvement in co-directing the first International Gamelan Festival in Vancouver in 1986—an event that grew out of the PKM. Nevertheless, he had to admit that he was an “indo” (using the colloquial term for Eurasian) from having “soaked for too long in Western culture and artistic and philosophical knowledge” (Kompas 1998). He went a step further in the preamble of his program notes, noting how he felt like he had become “a cultural ‘mephisto’.”

An ‘indo’ amidst a certain ‘missing link’ crowd that has lost its way. I now feel neither a part of this or that. A world between that exists outside the boundaries between the two. An “in-between” world, that is altogether deceptive [semi] and extremely unnerving.

Assuming he was not alone in his predicament, he asked “Do you not feel this way?” The compositions he presented at the Art Summit are “works that exist in the push-and-pull complex and syndrome of deceptive worlds that more and more I don’t know or understand” (Hardjana 1998c:50–51).

By the time of my interview with Hardjana in 2004, he seemed to have arrived at a stable if not entirely resolved relationship to his predicament. He asserted that he was “not a Javanese person that’s very contaminated by European music”—that although he was “musically Western, because I live from there, I think about that” he was still “struck with amazement every time I hear classical Javanese gamelan music.” Yet in recounting how he

40. At the sarasehan held as part of the sixth PKM in March 1985, Franki Raden and Sardono W. Kusumo underlined the importance of initiating a dialogue between this forum and the “international world.” This was realized the following year, in conjunction with the residency of a group from ASKI Solo at the Indonesian pavilion at the 1986 World Exposition in Vancouver, Canada. Works by Blacius Subono and Santosa, and A. L. Suwardi from ASKI Solo, and I Ketut Gede Asnawa from ASTI Denpasar were performed at the event (Hardjana 1986: 475-476). I visited this exposition twice, but this was before I had encountered Indonesian music. The festival, and the residency of Indonesian musicians, did much, however, to stimulate interest in gamelan among my colleagues in the Vancouver scene.
would discuss his musical “obsessions” with the composers he selected/commissioned for the PKM, he acknowledged that his thinking was “a bit Western,” and joked that he was “disturbed” (terusik) and prone to “mischief” (untuk nakal).

Within the Indonesian music world, Suka Hardjana commands as much authority as anyone. His authority rests, however, first and foremost on his mastery of Western art music—mastery at a level obtained, and thus only fully understood, by only a handful of Indonesian musicians—and then after that on the openness of his perspective and breadth of his knowledge. Among the ranks of Javanese gamelan musicians, his authority is recognized by those involved in the elite sphere of Indonesian public culture—whose involvement in that sphere is due, in part, to Hardjana’s recognition of their potential—resulting in an ongoing collaborative creative relationship with musicians from ASKI (STSI/ISI) Solo, and his appointment to the faculty of its graduate program in 2000. His stature has enabled him to accomplish a great deal. It has not, however, made him immune from the doubt that comes from “standing on the world of ‘in between’” (Hardjana 2000)—a predicament that is felt all the more acutely because the world of Western art music in which he was first absorbed is, in Indonesia, only incompletely present.
6 In the Absence of Authority: Repercussions and Responses

Suka Hardjana, profiled in the previous chapter, was far from alone in taking what I have characterized as a nativist turn. To my knowledge, all Western-oriented composers of *musik kontemporer*, with but one exception, have engaged in one way or another with traditional Indonesian musics, in many cases working extensively with traditional instruments and the musicians that play them. At the same time, there are a number of younger composers who have persevered in pursuing the Eurological mode of new music composition as a major focus, creating notated works for the European classical instrumentarium. It is to these composers, who have been most adversely affected by the predicament I outlined at the opening of the previous chapter—the absence of aesthetic authority that was a consequence of the underdeveloped state of Western art music in Indonesia—that I turn in this chapter.

I start by first following through with the historical survey of Indonesia’s classical music scene begun in chapters 1 and 2, focusing on developments from the 1970s through the 1990s in Indonesian orchestras. Then, after an overview of the variety of responses of younger Western-oriented composers to the lack of opportunity and support offered by that classical scene, I turn to more in-depth examinations of three individual composers. The first, Royke Koapaha, has struggled with the lack of affirmation from AMI/ISI Jogja, the school where he studied and now teaches. The second, Tony Prabowo, went on after studying with Slamet
Abdul Sjukur at IKJ to become far and away the most successful Western-oriented Indonesian composer of his generation. The third, Michael Asmara, stands between the first two, overcoming a similarly difficult experience at AMI/ISI Jogja by setting his sights elsewhere, while at the same time advancing his own career through his efforts to build a community of like-minded musicians in Jogja. I examine the directions they took as musicians and composers, and the perspectives they gained, in relation to their respective circumstances. None can be taken as representative of the typical Western-oriented Indonesian composer, as there is no such thing. Nevertheless, their individual cases, taken together, bring into sharper relief the cultural dynamics at play on the Western-oriented side of *musik kontemporer*.

**“Classical” Music in the New Order**

**The Ongoing Struggle of Classically-Oriented Orchestras**

As we saw in chapters 1 and 2, Western art music had a limited presence in colonial and newly postcolonial Indonesia, and most of what there was of a “classical” music scene is more accurately characterized as paraclassical. The political and economic conditions from the 1970s on were, for the most part, conducive to growth in many forms of “high” art. While there has been some growth in the localized practice of Western art music in Indonesia, as the following discussion of Indonesian orchestras demonstrates, the situation continued to fail to live up to the expectations and hopes of many of its most important figures.

A curious feature of Indonesia’s orchestral music scene is that it is split between two primary centers, neither of which alone has all of the resources necessary to sustain a
professional symphony orchestra. Most of the performance activity is in Jakarta, which up until the 1990s was the only city able to support viable professional orchestras.¹ Most of the players, however, are associated with AMI Jogja, which with its merger in 1984 with several other schools became ISI Jogja (Lindsay 1985: 71). ISI remains the only college level institution in Indonesia to train orchestral musicians. The Orkes Simfoni Jakarta (OSJ)—formed in 1967 by merging the musicians of two separate orchestras at RRI, the Orkes Studio Djakarta, which as noted in chapter 1 most closely resembled a Paul Whiteman-style dance band, and the more classically-oriented Orkes Radio Jakarta—was, through the 1970s, Indonesia’s only major orchestra. It had no permanent members, instead hiring musicians from Jogja (Hardjana n.d.[b], in 2004b:476). The same was true of two more recent ensembles discussed below: the Nusantara Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1988 (Budi Ngurah, p.c., 9 July 2005), and the Twilite Orchestra, founded in 1991. 80% of the latter’s members are from Jogja, among them ISI instructors (Leksono 2004: 73). This pattern has persisted despite a not insignificant distance, especially given the limitations of Indonesia’s transportation infrastructure, of over 500 kilometers, or 300 miles, between the two cities.

This split has remained stubbornly persistent because the pool of active orchestral musicians is small. Several people have stated that although there are several orchestras in Jakarta, the players are mostly the same—they differ mostly by their names, their directors or conductors, and to some extent their repertoire (Hardjana n.d.[b], in 2004b:475)(Nainggolan 2001)(Fahmi Alattas, p.c., 18 August 2005). Michael Asmara added that there was “no way two could play at the same time” (p.c., 29 July 2004). Whether or not this is literally the case,

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there does seem to be very significant overlap; eighteen of the fifty-three musicians listed on the program of the Nusantara Symphony Orchestra’s concert on 8 June 2005 are also among the seventy members of the Twilite Orchestra (Leksono 2004: 218-219).

The split is somewhat troublesome, with the shuttling back and forth of ISI faculty and students interfering with instruction at ISI. Edward Van Ness, the conductor of the Nusantara Symphony Orchestra, reflected that they “are taking the best out of ISI without even asking any permission.” Because “they come in for gigs . . . a lot of their time is not available at the campus” (Edward Van Ness, p.c., 14 June 2005).

More significantly, the split is indicative of the limited extent to which Western art music has been taken up in Indonesia. That the one Western-oriented conservatory is located in Jogia is the result of particular historical circumstances: the presence in the last decades of the colonial era of St. Xavarius in nearby Muntilan, and perhaps also the fact that Jogja functioned as the capital of Indonesia during the revolution. But despite the existence of SMIND and then AMI/ISI in Jogia, no independent professional orchestra has been founded there; the only orchestra in Jogia is the student ensemble at ISI. According to Hardjana, this is because Jogja is “poor” (Hardjana n.d.[b], in 2004b:476). More specifically it is because those with enough wealth to individually or collectively sponsor an orchestra have not been inclined to do so.

The fact that no institution comparable to ISI Jogja has been founded in Jakarta, where most of the players work, similarly points to a lack of interest, will, and/or coordination on the part of teachers, advocates, and public and private funders. There has been a proliferation of private music schools throughout Indonesia, many of them run by Yamaha. Royke Koapaha, who began his formal studies at a Yamaha school in Bandung in 1975, contends
that “classical music in Indonesia is inextricably linked to ’72, the year that Yamaha opened” (Royke Koapaha, p.c., 14 August 2005). But while Yamaha and similar schools may have given some musicians their start, or boosted their careers, mostly they have catered to amateurs. As Hardjana complained, Jakarta “does not have a school that teaches the performance of orchestral instruments. All there are are hobbyist courses and private music schools” (Hardjana n.d.[b], in 2004b:476).

The absence of a conservatory in Jakarta also reflects a lack of demand from students, which follows in turn from a lack of demand from audiences. While Jakarta has at no point since independence been without an orchestra, orchestral music has not exactly thrived. The amount of concert activity has been limited, resulting in similarly limited opportunities to earn a living playing classical music. Over its first seven years of operations, 1967–1974, the OSJ managed to perform a total of seventy-seven concerts, an average of just under one concert per month (Hardjana [1976?], in 2004a:42).

The OSJ seems to have been caught in a vicious cycle. The lack of interest on the part of

2. Royke granted that Yamaha was “merely looking for money,” an assessment that seems to have been widespread. A newspaper feature on the state of “classical music” in Indonesia portrayed Yamaha as being mostly interested in selling its instruments (Zaman 1984). All the same, Royke credited Yamaha with increasing the level of appreciation of music. He related how prior to studying guitar at Yamaha, he and his friends referred to any playing that involved “picking,” rather than “just strumming,” as “klasik.” “At minimum, we came to know what klasik actually is from Yamaha” (Royke Koapaha, p.c., 14 August 2005).

3. One prominent example, mentioned below as the conductor of the Nusantara Chamber Orchestra, and discussed briefly in chapter 6, was Yazeed Djamin, who won Yamaha’s 1972 and 1974 Electone Festival championship. The Electone was the electric organ decried by Slamat Abdul Sjukur (chapter 3).

4. There is one private school, the Yayasan Pendidikan Music (Music Education Foundation), that can at least lay claim to having contributed to the training of several classical performers of note, including the Indonesian pianists Kuei Pin Yeo (http://www.thejakartapost.com/yesterdaydetail.asp?fileid=20040314.L02, accessed 20 July 2007) and Ananda Sukarlan (Slamat Abdul Sjukur, p.c., 12 June 2005). However, the number of instruments for which it offers instruction is limited.
audiences undermined its growth, artistically as well as in terms of numbers of players and concerts. This resulted in low esteem among audiences and players alike, further limiting growth. Jakarta audiences were excited about a performance by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, which toured Indonesia in 1984; the concert, held in the main hall of the Senayan convention center, sold out. As impressive and seemingly encouraging as this turn-out was, it was interpreted as having more to do with curiosity and the prestige of the foreign than as an indication of the actual level of interest in classical music. In any case, the attendance at OSJ concerts was, by contrast, poor, even when those concerts were free (Zaman 1984). Part of the problem, identified by Hardjana some ten years earlier, was that the Indonesian audience for classical music, whom he called “troublesome,” was “too ‘foreign minded.” The problem extended to fellow musicians, who rarely attended concerts even when they were given free tickets. Hardjana also noted, however, that he himself did not play with the OSJ because of the low level of their performance (J.B. 1973). If this assessment is fair, it could not have helped them with attracting audiences.

In 1976, a few years after making this comment, Hardjana did perform with the OSJ, as one of a number of guest conductors. The goal, according to the invitation Hardjana received from the RRI administration, was to “revive” the OSJ, which “faced a chronic and critical decline,” and more broadly “to resuscitate the life of serious music in Indonesia” (Hardjana [1976?], in 2004a:31). Such calls were made repeatedly through OSJ’s troubled history. 1986 was a particularly challenging year. A fire destroyed Studio V of RRI Jakarta, which was considered the only performance hall in Indonesia adequate for a larger symphony orchestra (Hardjana 1991a, in 2004a). Three-quarters of the score library was also lost in the blaze (Edward Van Ness, p.c., 14 June 2005). This setback only compounded more endemic and
intractable problems. As Hardjana noted in a 1991 article, titled “Orkes Simfoni Jakarta Needs Renovation,” experienced players were retiring, withdrawing because of illness, or passing away. New players were “hard to recruit” because of the “lack of funds,” which together with the “bureaucracy” made it impossible to offer them “permanent positions.” Some players were “resolute nonetheless” and played for “honoraria.”

In 1988, the OSJ’s longtime principal conductor, Adidharma, retired. His replacement, Hardjana noted, was capable as a conductor, but lacked clout. The OSJ became inactive for nearly two years, before a 1991 performance sponsored by the Japan Foundation (Hardjana 1991a, in 2004a). In 1992, Adidharma stated bluntly, in an article titled “Professionally Managed Orchestras Still Long Way to Go in RI,” that “regrettably Jakarta . . . does not have a good symphony orchestra.” He continued that “orchestral groups cannot develop well here,” citing the lack of performances. Formerly, the OSJ “held routine concerts once a month,” but “for the last six years it has only rarely given concerts. Even the broadcast of classical music by the Symphony Orchestra on radio is done only once a month” (Jakarta Post 1992).

In 1988, as the Orkes Simfoni Jakarta was, in Hardjana’s words, “gasping for breath,” the Nusantara Chamber Orchestra (NCO) was founded, along with a private foundation to support it. The orchestra, led by pianist and composer Yazeed Djamin, fared little better. Hardjana gave the NCO a decidedly lukewarm assessment in his review, which had the subtitle “The Difficulty of Founding a Quality Orchestra” (Hardjana 1990, in 2004b). The NCO “lasted for about four years and then went to sleep due to financial and management problems.” Shortly thereafter, Djamin moved to Malaysia. The NCO was revived a decade later, in 2004, and renamed the Nusantara Symphony Orchestra (NSO). Edward Van Ness,
whom AMI Jogja had convinced in 1974 to held rebuild their program (chapter 3), was called in to do the same for the NSO (Edward Van Ness, p.c., 14 June 2005).

A more optimistic review of classical music activity in Jakarta from 2006 offered only faint praise for the NSO. Noting that “there have been years when an invitation to an NSO concert was something to be avoided,” the review promised that “that has changed,” and that more recent performances “were certainly enjoyable events.” Still, there were reservations. The review commented on lingering problems such as the lack of quality string players. The departure of a single violinist, IG Bagus Wiswakarma, was an event worth noting. The review added that “something needs to be done about building up the quality of string playing,” and suggested “bringing in faculty from overseas” as a possible solution. After half a century of efforts to develop a localized practice of Western art music, that practice still lacked the authority—and seemingly the expertise—to look first to itself.

*The Apotheosis of Paraclasicism: The Twilite Orchestra*

In one of his articles on orchestral music in Indonesia, Hardjana commented that there are no orchestras in Indonesia. He reasoned that there were orchestras “only in Jakarta,” and Jakarta was not the “true face of Indonesia” (Hardjana n.d.[b], in 2004b:474-475). Tony Prabowo made a similar pronouncement, but for him the issue was not the concentration of orchestras in a capital city that in many respects stood apart from the rest of the country. Instead, he questioned the legitimacy of those orchestras. He “enraged many Indonesians” by stating in a 1998 interview that “Indonesia has no orchestra!” (Griffin 2003: 10), or more precisely, that “we don’t even have a standard [level] orchestra”—that is, an orchestra meeting the artistic standards of the international classical music world (Chudori 1998).
Prabowo’s comment was prompted in large part by the low level of performance. But it can also be understood to refer to the aesthetic focus predominant among Indonesian orchestras. The Nusantara Symphony Orchestra has taken up the cause of classical music proper, dedicating itself for the most part to the core of the Western art music canon. It is, however, the exception rather than the norm (Budi Ngurah, p.c., 9 July 2005). In the decade before 2004, when the NSO picked up where the NCO had left off, orchestral musicians in Jakarta found work accompanying pop singers under the direction of conductors and arrangers such as Erwin Gutawa. This continues to be their bread and butter. As through much of the history of orchestral music in Indonesia, it is the paraclassical that has predominated.

Of all the orchestras that have come and gone since independence, the most intriguing case, in the way that it mixes the classical and the paraclassical, is the Twilite Orchestra (TO). A larger and more successful ensemble than the NSO that tours regularly to major Indonesian cities, the TO represents the dominant face of classical music in Indonesia. The image, and image-consciousness, of the TO is well represented by a coffee-table book published in 2004 (Leksono 2004). With a dust jacket sporting several corporate logos—that of its primary sponsor, the foundation started by the cigarette company Sampoerna, displayed most prominently on the back—the production values of the book are high. It is printed in black

5. However, the one concert of the NSO that I attended, on 8 June 2005, had a mixed focus. The program included pieces by J. S. Bach, Felix Mendelssohn, and Igor Stravinsky, but also three pieces that were not standard classical fare. Two featured the Indonesian Youth Choir: David Fanshawe’s “African Sanctus,” with accompaniment from “Papua instrumentalis,” a group led by Epi Martison, a member of Tony Prabowo’s New Jakarta Ensemble, discussed below; and an arrangement of the Balinese social dance form janger, with accompaniment by Balinese gamelan players and a Balinese dancer. The third was an orchestral piece based on janger titled Jangeran by New Zealand composer Chris Watson, erroneously attributed in the program to Otto Sidharta.
and white, with bronze ink for accent (suggestive, probably unintentionally, of gamelan instruments) and an abundance of artful photographs, presumably by the corporate sponsor Leonardi Portraiture, whose logo is on the back inside flap, along with Volvo and Bimasena, “The Mines and Energy Society.” The TO has become, as the book puts it, “a brand that combines an artistic and commercial image” (ibid.:15).

The TO and its name had its genesis in “one incredibly romantic evening” in 1991, when a group of musicians led by the conductor Addie MS played a private engagement to celebrate the new villa of the prominent Indonesian businessman Indra Usmansja Bakrie. At that engagement they “presented all pop songs,” but as the narrative of their formation continues, their concerts now “include at least one or two classical numbers” (ibid.:48). The TO’s first public appearance in 1992 was not a concert presentation but a broadcast performance on Indonesia's first private television station, RCTI. The program was with David Foster, whom allmusic describes as one of “the most commercially successful producers and composers in all of popular music” and credits with “virtually defining the adult contemporary format.” Many of the TO’s subsequent concerts were also with Western guest artists, including Natalie Cole, the daughter of Nat King Cole, and Richard Clayderman (Leksono 2004: 16-17), a classically trained pianist turned prolific recording artist and

7. Foster’s success came from “lending his signature sweeping power ballad aesthetic to smash hits from Celine Dion, Chicago and Whitney Houston” (http://www.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&sql=11:4hxsa93gb23u, accessed 05 February 2007). In his own right, he is perhaps best known for the music he composed for the 1985 film St. Elmo's Fire, including an instrumental theme that hit #15 on Billboard’s Hot 100 chart. The piece was inescapable when I was in high school due to the extensive airplay it received. Owing to the fact that I grew up in Foster’s home town, Victoria, BC, Canada, his name frequently came up when I mentioned I was interested in becoming a composer—“oh, like David Foster?” Although I had yet to be indoctrinated into the creed of avant-gardism by my undergraduate composition teachers, Foster was very definitely not someone I wished to emulate.
performer of easy-listening instrumental pop, some of it labelled “neo-classical,” who overall I would point to as a prime example of paraclassicism.  

Popular artists and repertoire were key in the TO’s rise, and continue to be featured in its programming. At the same time it has made an engagement with classical music proper a key part of its identity and credibility. In discussing the TO’s repertoire, the English language summary in its book begins by noting that the orchestra “has staged a wide collection of music from operas, operettas, ballets, symphonies, marches, overtures, concertos, and other forms of musical works.” Continuing, it adds that it also “plays music from Broadway musicals,” “movie themes,” and “Indonesian national music.” This last category includes “songs from the era of struggle for Independence,” the same songs that were a staple of fare offered by the Orkes Studio Djakarta, and “Indonesian art songs,” that rather vague category referred to in Indonesian as lagu seriosa (ibid.: chapter 3). The more detailed “Repertoire Gallery” in the Indonesian language body of the book starts with this category, there called “Indonesian Collection.” Among the works listed are songs by Gesang and Marzuki, as well as by Pasaribu’s nemesis, Maladi. Neither Pasaribu nor Simanjuntak are represented, but their colleagues Manik and Sitompul are. The chapter continues listing items in its “Classical and

8. Clayderman’s repertoire encompasses the best known of classical works, or best known movements in the case of multi-movement works; newly composed pieces in a vaguely Romantic style stripped of dynamics, dramatic contrast, and harmonic or emotional complexity; and popular songs from “La Vie en Rose” to those of the Swedish pop group ABBA. Almost invariably, his piano playing is backed by lush arrangements of acoustic or synthetic orchestral instruments and drum kit, which most critics in the West would decry as saccharine. allmusic notes that Clayderman was once recognized as “the most successful pianist in the world” by The Guinness Book of World Records, and that Nancy Reagan called him “the prince of romance” (www.allmusic.com, s.v. “Richard Clayderman”, accessed 05 February 2007). He is seemingly ignored by music scholars, a search of JSTOR returning only three articles. Two of them, interestingly, mention his popularity in connection with profiles of the music industry in China and Japan (Hamm 1991: 13; Mitsui 1983: 111-112).

9. See chapters 1 and 2 for discussions of these figures.
Semiclassical Treasury,” which consists of warhorses of the orchestral canon, typically single movements in the case of multi-movement works. Richard Strauss’s Also Sprach Zarathustra Op 30, Introduction is listed there, but also under film music as the theme from 2001: A Space Odyssey. There are also sections for “Broadway Musicals” and “World Music, Pop Music, and Seasonal Music” (ibid.:149-169).

The Twilite Orchestra is essentially a “pops” orchestra. Indeed, it explicitly identifies with the category, with a chapter in its book titled “Indonesia Pops Orchestra” (ibid.:33-44). Rather than documenting the TO’s own Indonesian precursors, as the title suggests it might, the chapter is mostly taken up by an overview of the form in the West. It begins by noting examples of pops orchestras playing classical selections, of opera superstars singing songs from films and musicals, and with the observation that “even in countries where the classical tradition is very thick like Austria there are pops orchestras” (ibid.:33-34). The history of the Boston Pops figures prominently. For the most part the chapter is celebratory, but at those points where the TO’s own artistic direction is discussed, there is an undertone of defensiveness, as if it feels the need to justify its choices. The chapter closes by discussing an exchange with the late composer and singer Harry Roesli, in which Roesli responded to statements by Addie MS, the conductor of the TO. Addie had stated that his goal was to provide “a bridge for music lovers,” who after “appreciating what he presented” would “go

10. Documenting the history of orchestral music in Indonesia would have required considerable research. As the TO’s conductor Addie MS notes in the opening of his preface, the very idea for publishing a book on the TO came out of his desire “to look at the history of symphony orchestras in our land, especially in the fifties which is said to be the Golden Age of symphonic music in Jakarta.” He was unable, however, to find a single book or recording (Addie MS, in Leksono 2004:viii). This lack is symptomatic of a xenocentrism that has long dominated the outlook of the metropolitan cultural sphere and Western-oriented music culture in which the TO exists, and which, despite a commendable effort to promote music by Indonesian composers, it perpetuates in the bulk of its programming.
toward orchestral music proper.” Roesli advised that Addie should “stay his course.” He need not “develop his orchestra in the form of Ansembel Jakarta”—the short-lived chamber orchestra founded by Suka Hardjana discussed in the previous chapter—“or the Nusantara Chamber Orchestra.” The TO’s current format “was needed by a group of society.” Roesli added that “the alternative entertainment offered by Addie MS is just as serious as orchestras that play exclusively classical repertoire” (ibid.:43-44).

Addie’s concern betrays a certain amount of investment in a cultural hierarchy in which Western art music holds pride of place.11 But if the TO ranks somewhat lower than an orchestra such as the NSO among one particular contingent of Indonesia’s musical elite, this has little bearing on its standing as far and away the most successful bearer of orchestral music in Indonesia. Its formula is, as Roesli observed, in tune with the taste of the audience it serves—an audience which draws mostly from “the middle and upperclass segment of the society” (Leksono 2004: 209) and that includes many of the more sizable and influential political and economic elite. It is the TO that best represents the state of classical music in Indonesia. That this state is not strictly classical—it is more accurately, as I have argued, characterized as paraclassical—matters to a few, including many of those involved with *musik kontemporer*. But for most, it is irrelevant.

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11. Like the TO itself, Addie MS did not start out as staunchly classical, but first established himself as an arranger working with pop singers (*Ensiklopedi Musik*, s.v. “Sumaatmaja, Addie M”).
Responses to the Absence of Authority

The Disconnect with the “Classical”

For a figure such as Harry Roesli—who straddled the worlds of art and pop with appearances both at the PKM and on programs of the TO, recordings with his rock band and of his electroacoustic compositions, and involvement with the film and theater worlds in which the lines between art and pop are less sharply drawn—performing with the TO was a viable channel for his artistic vision. Djaduk Ferianto, a traditionally-based composer who will be profiled in the following chapter, similarly welcomed the opportunity to create music for the TO. For most of those involved with musik kontemporer, however, the TO has offered little. It is instead emblematic of the dominance of a paraclassical orientation within Indonesia’s classical music scene that most musik kontemporer composers find antithetical to their own aesthetic priorities. Slamet Abdul Sjukur, decrying the superficiality of a public “determined to become metropolitans,” gave as an example the craze for fried chicken. “Our taste is more concerned with the batter and the sauce than the flavor of the chicken itself, to the point that if one were to substitute a worn out sock, people wouldn’t notice” (Sjukur 1991: 127). The TO, as Addie MS recognized, mostly presents something other than orchestral music proper. But for most of its audience, familiar and accessible music with the prestigious veneer of an

12. For a profile of Roesli as a pop figure, see Sakrie (2007: 141-147). For a perspective that also takes into account his experimentalist work, see Tyson (2011). Roesli’s electroacoustic piece “Asmat Dream” is the title track of a compilation of works by Sundanese composers produced by Jody Diamond and Larry Polansky (1993).

13. Djaduk was contracted as an additional musician to perform with the TO for Opera Hanoman, an production by the theater director Nano Riantiarno with whom Djaduk had worked. Addie MS was initially made responsible for the “music directing,” but because of his limited knowledge of wayang, which the production referenced, Djaduk ended up composing the music (Djaduk Ferianto, p.c., 27 July 2004).
orchestral arrangement is exactly what they want.

Far more consequential than the lack of esteem composers have for Indonesian orchestras, however, is the lack of interest those orchestras and most orchestral musicians have in *musik kontemporer*. There have been a few occasions for which orchestral players have been mustered to perform kontemporer compositions. Sjukur’s “Om,” for string orchestra—his first orchestral work—was commissioned by the Director General for Culture for the fiftieth anniversary of Indonesia’s independence and performed at the 1995 Art Summit (Mack 2005: 155-155-165). Tony Prabowo’s “Requiem for Strings”—which like many of his works for Western instrumentation was commissioned and first performed by an ensemble in the United States—was performed by the ISI Jogja orchestra at the next Art Summit in 1998 (Griffin 2003: 149). But for the most part, the orchestral scene has been indifferent at best, and at times openly hostile to anything even mildly modernist. Fahmi Alattas, another student of Sjukur, described the reception of an arrangement he had made of the popular *orkes Melayu* song “Bunga Nirwana” for the television program Orkes Remaja (Teen Orchestra). He set the melody as a “samba” in 7/8, which proved to be beyond the ability of anyone in the percussion section. All the players joined in cursing Alattas, regarding him as “inhuman” (Fahmi Alattas, p.c., 18 August 2005).

This sort of aesthetic disconnect between modernist composers and the average orchestral performer is common enough in any classical music scene. But in Indonesia, the gap between the two is better described as a gulf. In large part this is because of the absence on both sides of significant contingents whose aesthetic and practice aligns more closely with that of the

14. *Orkes Melayu* is a popular music genre that predated *dangdut*, and that is claimed by some involved with the latter to be the genre out of which it grew (Weintraub 2010:chapter 2).
Western art music tradition. The most prominent but exceptional case of a composer committed fully to European classical music was Yazeed Djamin, the one Western-oriented participant in the PKM who was affiliated with neither IKJ nor AMI Jogja. After twice winning Yamaha’s Electone Festival Championship, Djamin went to the United States in 1974 to study piano and composition at the Peabody Conservatory. In 1985, when he presented three works for piano and one for piano and violin at the sixth PKM, he was midway through a doctorate program in piano performance at The Catholic University of America. After finishing in 1988, he returned to Indonesia and founded the Nusantara Chamber Orchestra. But as noted above, the NCO only lasted for “about four years” before it “went to sleep.” Shortly after that, in 1994, Djamin was lured away to become composer-in-residence with the National Symphony Orchestra of Malaysia.  

Orchestral performers, on the other side, generally showed little commitment to the Western art music canon. Most students at ISI Jogja aspire to play in the TO or other orchestras, such as the one led by Erwin Gutawa, which are even more focused on arrangements of pop music (Michael Asmara, p.c., 29 July 2004; Fahmi Alattas, p.c., 18 August 2005). They have limited exposure to the core of the orchestral canon, and even less to works by early twentieth-century modernists on its margins—although apparently the student orchestra that used to exist at AMI Jogja, before students became too busy with “outside projects,” would perform works by Debussy, Stravinsky, Bartók, Copland, and “very rarely Schoenberg.” “The Rite of Spring was performed” (Michael Asmara, p.c., 29 July 2004), a work that as Alattas pointed out was far more challenging in its use of meter than his arrangement of “Bunga Nirwana” in 7/8.

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Despite Alattas’s negative experience, he still dreams of writing for orchestra. He has managed to have some of his instrumental music performed, such as a piece for solo clarinet presented at the 1998 Pekan Komponis that he composed for a friend who was open to playing multiphonics (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1998: 10). But mostly he has ended up composing electroacoustic music, pursuing his interest in microtonal tuning systems with tunable electronic keyboards. Some of this music is more abstract in its exploration of clusters and sustained sonorities, while other pieces incorporate references to musical styles—such as the blues, *tanjidor*,16 and gamelan—that would be suitable, in their electronically simulated form, but minus the microtonal tunings and other avant-gardist distortions, for the music he composes and arranges for television programs.17

The eclecticism of Alattas’s music is a microcosm of that which was becoming typical of *musik kontemporer* as a whole. Among the pieces by Western-oriented Indonesian composers at the Forum Musik Jakarta—a one-time festival held in 1996 that like the PKM included traditionally-based composers as well, but unlike it also featured composers from abroad—there were a few that continued the experimentalism evident in the works of students of Slamet Abdul Sjukur and Jack Body presented at the first few PKM. Haryo “Yose” Suyoto,

16. *Tanjidor* is, in its roots, “an Indonesian version of the European brass ensemble,” but it is also an example of a hybrid genre. At some point repertoire from various Sundanese and Batavian genres “became the standard repertoire of the band,” for which traditional Indonesian or Chinese instruments are added. *Tanjidor* musicians “considered European marches and waltzes to be the signature pieces of the genre” (Sumarsam 2013:17-18). Volume 5 in Philip Yampolsky’s Music of Indonesia series features recorded examples, as well as further information about the genre.

17. Alattas gave me a CD of some of his microtonal works. I obtained a copy of his concert at the 1998 Pekan Komponis from Otto Sidharta.
who had studied with both teachers, presented a one piece for twelve radios,\(^\text{18}\) and another for bowed glasses and cardboard (Tejo 1996a). Ben Pasaribu, who had completed his M.A. at Wesleyan University in 1990, presented a “quartet for three videos and one human” (Suara Pembaruan 1996). There were also two pieces for conventional instruments: one by Nainggolan for soprano, cello, and piano that also involved dance; and one by Suyoto for three marimbas (Tejo 1996a).

Just as prevalent at the Forum Musik Jakarta were pieces demonstrating new directions. Harry Roesli’s contribution, with its use of electronic keyboards, guitar, and “musical material taken from house music,” represented an engagement with popular music idioms beyond simply accepting composing or arranging jobs for money. The same was true of Didi AGP, with a piece for an “electronic ensemble, MIDI sequencer, digital tape, and Minang vocals” (Enge 1996), except that in his case his involvement with more mainstream musics—playing bass, arranging, and songwriting for various jazz artists, and writing music for film and television—was his primary career focus (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1998a: 7).\(^\text{19}\) His incorporation of Minang vocals also represented an engagement with a traditional music, as did Marusya Nainggolan’s piece for a “Betawi music ensemble” (Tejo 1996b).\(^\text{20}\)

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18. The piece was titled “Homage to JC,” presumably meaning John Cage, who in 1951 pioneered the use of radios in experimental music with his “Imaginary Landscape no. 4.”

19. Didi AGP studied “orchestration and composition” with Slamet Abdul Sjukur, and “received much support from Haryo Suyoto,” but at the same time studied bass with Indonesian jazz musician Amir Katamsi, and took jazz courses with Jack Lesmana and Elfa Secoria (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1998: 7).

20. Among the most significant genres in traditional Minang music are those involving singing (dendang) by one or two singers, accompanied by flute (saluang) or a bowed lute (rabab). Betawi refers to the ethnic identity of descendants of those who during the colonial era migrated from various parts of what is now Indonesia to Jakarta, which was then called as Batavia. For introductions to Minang and Betawi musics, see volumes 3, 5, 6 and 12 of the Music of Indonesia series produced by Philip Yampolsky.
The increasing openness toward popular idioms was one manifestation of a broader tendency toward populism that I examine in the following chapter. It is a tendency evident among traditionally-based composers as well, but at the same time it one that many composers, on both the traditionally-based and Western-oriented sides, resisted. By contrast, practically all Western-oriented composers engaged with traditional Indonesian musics, mostly through direct collaboration with traditional musicians. Over the course of my research I learned of only one Western-oriented composer who avoided this direction. Suyoto was reportedly “fanatical” about “not wanting to take elements from tradition” (Michael Asmara, p.c., 06 April 2004). All others have at some point worked with traditional musicians. Several have made doing so a key aspect of their compositional practice. Even those who earlier in their careers appeared staunchly Western-oriented, or who otherwise appear aesthetically aligned with internationalized trends with Western roots, had followed this tendency. Trisutji Kamal, who at the Pertemuan Musik in 1974 called for greater institutional support for European classical music and for Indonesian composers based in that tradition, now works regularly with her ensemble “consisting of Piano Duo and Balinese Percussion” that she founded in 1994 (http://www.geocities.com/trisutji/CV.html, accessed 19 July 2007). Suka Hardjana, as we saw, became one of the most outspoken champions of traditionally based composers through his position as director of the PKM, and in the 1990s had himself begun composing for Javanese gamelan.

Yet even while musik kontemporer as a whole was drifting away from a primary basis in the Western art music tradition, there were a handful of figures who were persistent in composing in idioms and forms rooted in that tradition. None did so exclusively—without exception they engaged in one or another of the directions identified above. Nevertheless,
their compositional engagements with Western art music idioms were central to their musical identities, whether or not they self-identified or accepted being identified as Western-oriented. The remainder of this chapter will be taken up with profiles of three such composers, exploring their relationships to a still predominantly Eurological international avant-garde, to the lack of support from what there was of a “classical” music scene within Indonesia, and to the nativist directions that were increasingly prevalent in musik kontemporer.

Royke Koapaha

The Conflicted Identity of a Pure Urbanite

The first figure I will discuss is Royke Koapaha (1961–). Koapaha described himself as one of a handful of Indonesian composers who were “pure urban”—two others he mentioned were Suyoto, discussed briefly above and in chapter 3, and Budi Ngurah, who teaches cello at ISI Jogja. They grew up in large cities—in Koapaha’s case, Bandung—speaking Jakarta-slang and listening to rock and pop, by both Western and Indonesian artists. Underscoring his lack of connection with traditional and quasi-traditional Indonesian forms, he noted how when he was young he would laugh when he heard kroncong—a genre with Western roots that was the music of earlier generations of city-dwellers, but that in the form that developed since independence incorporated much of the sensibility of traditional Javanese gamelan music. Koapaha is not as “fanatical” about keeping his music free of traditional elements as

21. Except where noted otherwise, all quotations in this section are taken from a conversation with Royke Koapaha and Memet Chairul Slamet on 6 August 2005 and a subsequent conversation with Koapaha alone on 14 August 2005.
Suyoto; he recounted how he had studied gamelan for three years as a student at AMI, and expressed his concern about the declining interest in gamelan among Indonesian youth. But neither has he embraced working with traditional musicians or composing for traditional instruments as a significant focus.

Koapaha’s initial involvement with music on more than a casual level was with guitar. Guitar seems to be the most common first instrument among Western-oriented composers of _musik kontemporer_—a tendency that almost certainly follows from the instrument’s ubiquity in Indonesia. After picking up some basics from a friend of his older brother, in 1975 Koapaha started taking lessons at a school run by the Japanese company Yamaha. He did well, winning several awards for his playing while in high school. He has continued to pursue classical guitar seriously, and has earned some distinction, winning Indonesia- and Southeast Asian-wide competitions. He has taught guitar at ISI Jogja since the late 1980s.

Though it was only when he began studying at ISI—or AMI, as it was known at the time—that Koapaha became actively involved in composition, he had already gained some familiarity with the international avant-garde while in high school. One source was his guitar teacher, who introduced him to the music of Leo Brouwer and Belá Bartók. Another was a circle of friends that included Harry Roesli who were interested in progressive rock. He described how when they would sit around drinking and listening to bands like Gentle Giant,

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22. Others whose first instrument was guitar include Franki Raden, Arjuna (another notable figure at IKJ who did not continue composing but remained a close friend of Tony Prabowo), and Michael Asmara. As Philip Yampolsky notes in volume 20 of his _Music of Indonesia_ series, a recorded survey of “Indonesian guitars” focused on their incorporation into “local musics,” “guitars are everywhere in Indonesia.” “They are not just used by teenagers strumming the accompaniment to Jakarta pop tunes,” he adds, but acknowledges that “there’s plenty of that, too.” In my own experience I encountered plenty of amateur adolescent guitarists, playing and singing outside of houses in the evenings, and also busking.
Kansas, or King Crimson, they would also listen to cassettes they found of European composers such as Iannis Xenakis, reveling in the “strange sounds” that emerged from both.

Koapaha decided to pursue further studies at AMI, rather than IKJ where Roesli had studied, as his Dutch guitar teacher had promised to help him apply to later study at his alma mater, the Sweelinck Conservatory, in Amsterdam. Koapaha started at AMI in 1981, the same year that AMI’s director Suhascarya eliminated contemporary music from the curriculum. As detailed in chapter 3, Koapaha experienced several major setbacks as a result of Suhascarya’s lack of support. Suhascarya thwarted Koapaha’s aspirations to study in the Netherlands by failing to respond to letters of invitation from the Sweelinck Conservatory’s director. Suhascarya similarly passed over Koapaha when choosing who would go to study at the Stephen F. Austin State University in Texas, despite the fact that he had earned the highest grade on the test given by Dan Beaty, the guest instructor from that school. As also noted in chapter 3, Koapaha suffered as the result of a general aversion to anything conspicuously _kontemporer_; he was mocked by fellow students and made the butt of jokes by fellow faculty.

Koapaha described AMI at the time he started as a “no man’s land,” and spoke of there being a “missing link” after Jack Body had left, with nobody creating anything. There was only one person, Yoesbar Djaelani, a “very prominent” student of Body’s, who started an extra-curricular composition study group. Conditions improved after Suyoto returned to Jogja in the late 1980s, but even then Koapaha and his colleagues mostly worked outside of AMI—which by then had become part of ISI. They organized events, including a series of eight concerts, one per semester over four years. They made connections with others in the contemporary arts scene in Jogja, participating in events at the _padepokan_ (studio) of the
senior choreographer Bagong Kussudiardjo. Koapaha spoke of “leaving the nest”—referring presumably to AMI/ISI—and becoming involved with Sanggar Bambu, a community of artists from various disciplines, including followers (anak buah) of the poet and dramaturge Rendra, and the poet Emha Ainum Nadjib.

Koapaha did not leave the nest forever, however. Nor did he stray very far. Despite the difficulties he has experienced at AMI/ISI, in his work as a composer he has remained in the circle that relies to a significant extent on the meager support that the institution has offered, in terms of resources such as players, and perhaps most significantly, employment. In Koapaha’s case, he teaches at ISI not as a composer, but as a guitarist. He has continued to be involved in other circles as well. He plays in rock bands, and he noted that in the rock scene centered around Jalan Malioboro, the famed street in the center of Jogja, that is what he is known for. More specifically, he is interested in a “progressive direction.” He also continues to perform as a classical guitarist—he mentioned a group recital in which he had taken part the previous year at a prestigious studio in Jakarta.

Koapaha’s varied involvements complicate his sense of musical identity, especially because they undermine as often as they reinforce his sense of belonging to disparate communities. He recounted how the composer and impresario Sapto Raharjo—who will be profiled in the following chapter—would introduce him as a guitarist, while his guitarist colleagues would introduce him as a composer. Most troubling, he noted how his involvement in rock was a cause of suspicion when he engaged in composition. When I asked for whom this caused doubt—I assumed it was not an issue among his closest colleagues—he said it was a general perception, “common sense.” “Who is this person? He’s a rocker.”
Anxieties and Shortcomings

In contrast to his earlier role model, Harry Roesli, Koapaha has not integrated his varied creative interests. Instead, his activities have remained rather compartmentalized. The worlds of rock and composition have remained, for him, separate. The logic of exclusivity that persists among those involved with Western art music at AMI/ISI is undoubtedly a factor. For unlike Roesli, Koapaha has not found the courage to defy the authority represented, however imperfectly, by AMI/ISI. He has remained somewhat tethered to ISI, as a “kontemporer composer” and a classical guitarist. He is thus reminded of ISI’s inadequacies, and by ISI of his own shortcomings.

Of the Western-oriented composers that I spoke with, Koapaha was particularly forthright about his anxieties. The lack of support and insufficient guidance from teachers and schools, and the paucity of opportunities to learn, or to have works performed, were common topics of discussion with most, but for Koapaha they had a greater sense of immediacy. He believed—mostly justifiably—that his experience had been harder than most. When “Jack Body was around” at AMI, it was “thriving.” His students “went along to Jakarta,” and “participated in the PKM.” The implication was that those who started after Body left missed out on such opportunities, though Koapaha himself had presented his “Sonatina for Piano and Flute” at the fourth PKM in 1983, and participated as a performer in Djaelani’s “Tanya Yang Tak Terjawab IV” the previous year. Koapaha was, however, the last composer from AMI to participate in the festival. More to the point, after Body left, Koapaha and his colleagues “no longer had a figure [to look to]”; they “didn’t know anything.” Franki Raden, Tony Prabowo, and Otto Sidharta at IKJ, “all of them had more of a teacher” (lebih punya guru). There was more “intense” activity with guests from abroad, and their primary teacher, Slamet Abdul
Sjukur, had himself studied in Europe. They had more opportunities to interact with people from outside, and they themselves went to Europe.23 “I have never been to Europe,” Koapaha emphasized. “I’m in Jogja”—that is, stuck in Jogja.

Again, it is not strictly true that Koapaha has been confined, or confined himself, to Jogja. But it is the case that he and most of his colleagues from AMI/ISI—Michael Asmara, profiled below, is an exception—have tended to remain within their own circle of activity, and have a correspondingly limited perspective. Koapaha’s points of reference in talking about new music included a handful of notable figures such as Xenakis, Isang Yun, and John Cage, but mostly it was skewed toward composers of guitar repertoire, and those who happened to have passed through AMI/ISI. An exchange between Koapaha and his close friend Memet Chairul Slamet hints at their concern with the status (or lack thereof) of the visiting instructors they were telling me about. After discussing the excitement around American composer Philip Corner’s repeat visits, Koapaha mentioned Ellen Southard, who was “not a composer” but nevertheless “taught composition” at AMI. Koapaha added “I don’t think she’s famous.” Slamet teased “famous according to Asmara, right?” After clarifying that Slamet was referring to Corner, Koapaha joked “yes, famous to Asmara” and laughed heartily.24 There was perhaps also an element of envy here, as Asmara had made a

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23 While it is true that there were a greater number of illustrious guests who came to Jakarta—Slamet Abdul Sjukur arranged visits by Ton de Leeuw, Jean-Claude Eloy, Les Percussions de Strasbourg, and a five-week festival of French contemporary music (Slamet Abdul Sjukur, p.c., 9 Septemner 2004)—to my knowledge, of Koapaha’s cohort, only Otto Sidharta and Harry Roesli studied composition in Europe. Suyoto studied briefly in New Zealand, while Marusya Nainggolan studied in Australia and the United States. Tony Prabowo did not study formally abroad, though as we will see in the pages that follow, his success had much to do with opportunities through a connection with the Juilliard School.

24 American composer Philip Corner, whom I discuss at greater length in chapter 6, does not have anywhere near the stature of contemporaries such as Philip Glass, Steve Reich, or Terry Riley, but is notable for his involvement in Fluxus and other facets of 1960s experimentalism in New York. Ellen Southard is a pianist on faculty at Shasta College, a community college in Redding, California (http://
particularly strong connection with Corner.

More than the caliber or standing of the composers they had the opportunity to interact with in Jogja—which was mixed—what perpetuated their sense of isolation was the lack of a culture at AMI/ISI to contextualize the information they were able to glean about the international new music scene. As contemporary music had been excluded from the curriculum, there was no instruction to sustain such a culture; instead, there developed a general hostility to musical modernism and experimentalism. Apart from the limited instruction they received from visiting teachers, Koapaha and his colleagues studied with each other, or on their own. Koapaha may have been stuck in Jogja, but there were “many books.” “But for those books, I had to, I acted as teacher, I acted as student.” He read books by Vincent Persichetti, Arnold Schoenberg’s Style and Idea, and the “Philosophy of Atonal Music,” by which he presumably meant Theodor Adorno’s Philosophy of Modern Music (he could not recall the author). He read these in English as best he could, having studied English in a private language course for just three semesters. He explained the danger of misunderstanding the ideas he encountered in these books with the rather colorful analogy of a discarded chamber pot—or as he put it, a “piss-pot.” “You know piss-pot?” he asked in English. “Pot for piss!” It was as if “a plane from Europe came” and “tossed out a piss-pot.” He happened to take it, without knowing what it was. He looked at it, and thought, “oh, maybe it’s for holding vegetables,” and thus “its function changed.” Less colorfully, and presenting this as a more widespread issue, he talked about how he thought there were “many that don’t understand [John] Cage,” imitating aspects of his “behavior, without the philosophy.”

Koapaha’s anxiety thus took both the form of self-criticism, and a more general critique of musik kontemporer in Indonesia. On a personal level, he recognized that he was stylistically inconsistent. He acknowledged criticism to that effect from Jack Body about a piece of his, only two minutes long, that “used triads” in the first part, and “quartal” harmony in the second. He felt he lacked the kind of compositional system he perceived in European composers, and—again comparing himself to his peers from Jakarta—that students of Slamet Abdul Sjukur such as Tony Prabowo had developed. From what I have heard of and read about Koapaha’s music—he admits to being “the worst” at documenting his work—it does seem extremely varied. And rather than the result of a deliberate eclecticism, it seems rather, as Trisutji Kamal said in general of Koapaha’s generation, that he was “still searching.” Koapaha’s essay on his string quartet “Dari Suata Satu” included in the compendium of documents from the PKM—but apparently not the work that was performed—describes a complex compositional process of assigning themes derived from the harmonic series to a grid of “boxes” which are then assigned to different instruments, and subject to permutations such as “retrograde” and octave displacement (Hardjana 1986: 240-249). For Nur Gora Rupa, an interdisciplinary arts festival held in Solo in 1994, Koapaha presented a nearly twenty-minute piece that was appropriately experimentalist in certain respects. The second half consisted of single tones or chords played on synthesizers and isolated percussive sounds, coordinated loosely if at all, with the instruments distributed around the performance space. The first half featured a theatrical element, with two performers trying fitfully to sleep,

25. Nur Gora Rupa was a major festival produced by the Taman Budaya Jawa Tengah di Surakarta (more commonly referred to as TBS), a cultural center located on the outskirts of Solo next to the main campus of ASKI. I am lucky to have attended much of this festival, though unfortunately, I did not take notes on what I observed. I do not recall seeing Koapaha’s performance; my comments are based on video documentation I obtained from the archives of TBS.
occasionally rolling over each, stealing pillows, shifting their sleeping pads, or adjusting their sarongs. The musical accompaniment by two synthesizers was reminiscent—in its melodic focus, constantly shifting modes, and particular kind of heterophony—of the music of Spanish-Canadian composer José Evangelista, who had visited AMI/ISI while in Indonesia for three months and “made a big impression.”

Yet other pieces conform to the idea from AMI/ISI that one “must [create] classical works. That is, they must be normal—not avant-garde.” This is the case with his “Tiga Bagatela” for cello and piano, which are vaguely Bartókian—modern in their harmonic language, but basically classical in instrumental technique and expression. It was presumably also the case with his “Sonatina” for piano and flute, the piece that he ended up presenting at the fourth PKM in 1983.

Koapaha attributed his stylistic inconsistency to his being “ahistorical with Europe.” “I read books, I looked at everything, this is baroque, this classical. And all of that entered me at the same time.” He had perhaps internalized a criticism that Dieter Mack, who had also taught as a guest instructor at AMI/ISI, had been leveling generally at Indonesian composers for some time (Mack 1994). Koapaha too understood this as a broader issue, as the “Indonesian condition.” He did “not know where things were going.”

Looking to Where the Grass Is Greener, Staying Where It Is Not

Memet Chairul Slamet chimed in after these comments, stating in sum that “We only have a

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26. Evangelista relates his compositional approach, which uses “monodic writing, creating musical texture from a single melodic line without the assistance of either harmony or counterpoint” to his “growing interest in the music of Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia” (Notes from the audio CD José Evangelista, Salabert/Actuels SCD 9102, 1992).

27. A performance at the 2008 Yogyakarta Contemporary Music Festival can be viewed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8m7hbuNSacg (accessed 14 October 2011).
spirit that is extremely unclear, in my opinion,” which prompted Koapaha to start laughing. The two then began comparing how their respective backgrounds contributed to their lack of clarity. Slamet commented that although he started at AMI only one year after Koapaha, he thought of himself as very much his junior. The issue was that he came “late to music school,” because he was from a village. It was only at AMI that he began studying his primary instrument, flute, with a “method that was correct,” that he “studied classical [music]” and “technique.” His prior background was in kroncong.

Koapaha countered that “actually, that’s fortunate” because “there’s a lot of tradition,” and reiterated that he himself was “urban.” Koapaha had grown to regard this as a distinct disadvantage, and, in contrast to Suyoto’s indifference to anything traditional, had become concerned with the state and status of musics such as gamelan. In a variation on the trope that Indonesians needed to take a greater interest in their own traditions, lest someday they find themselves having to travel abroad to study them,\(^\text{28}\) he related his fear that the decline of traditional music in Indonesia might undermine its ability to contribute to global culture—that this would reverse “the trend of the twentieth century” to “look to the East” evident also in the interest in Buddhism. “At a certain moment, Europe won’t look to the East any more.”

Koapaha had himself made some effort to study gamelan at AMI/ISI, but was “confused,” not having found teachers “that could explain.” He was frustrated by how

\(^{28}\) In an example of this platitude recounted by Marc Perlman, in a speech in the 1980s the Governor of Central Java “warned Indonesian youth not to abandon the traditional arts,” noting how “humiliating” it would be “if future generations of Indonesians had to go to Australia, Europe, Japan, or America to study their own traditional music!” (Perlman 1999: 2) While there certainly are some from the political and economic elite who only engage with traditional music and dance once they go abroad to study—one of Suharto’s grandchildren is among the Indonesian students I have taught as director of the Cornell Gamelan Ensemble—Indonesia remains unequivocally the center of a musical culture that like Western art music has also become international in its reach.
“karawitan people” teach by rote, how they “only say ‘like this’” and use terminology inconsistently. One exception, a lecturer at ISI named Soeroso who Koapaha described as a “karawitan musicologist,” had studied gamelan “theoretically” in the Netherlands and written a book. Koapaha did not know to what extent he was known as a player in Jogja, but he did teach practical classes at ISI. He was “the only one at ISI able to dialogue with us”—that is, those studying Western music who did not already have a practical background in gamelan. But unfortunately, he was “too modest.” Koapaha felt that there needed to be a more concerted effort on the part of government—he used the English phrase “grand planning”—to offset the “shifts” in an urban society that was becoming “alienated from its own culture.” This would include the formulation of methods for teaching gamelan to “dilettantes.”

Koapaha’s interest in gamelan remains that of an outsider. He has not, to my knowledge, attempted to engage with it as a composer to any significant extent. It is not really available to him as a musical focus that might provide some clarity. Classical guitar and progressive rock seemingly are—he expressed no misgivings about his involvement in either, other than that they contributed to his confused sense of musical identity. He expressed his admiration for Slamet’s ability to “enter one track” and “concentrate,” but stated, when I asked him if he didn’t want to do just one thing, that to do so would be “to limit myself too much.” A person “has a thousand aesthetic possibilities.” “How far can I go? And in which direction?” To limit himself to “musik kontemperor” would be “a shame,” “too poor.” Yet musik kontemperor also seems to be essential to realizing himself musically. Despite how fraught his involvement in composition has been, he has stuck with it.

Vincent McDermott, a composer who had studied gamelan in Solo in the 1970s and had returned to teach at the new “Western Music Composition” (Penciptaan Musik Barat)
graduate program at ISI, relayed Koapaha’s impression of his Indonesian teachers’ response to his ambitions to become a composer.

You want to write music? How dare you want to write music. Look at what Mozart has done, look what . . . What are you, a child. How dare you think you can do something. Maybe, write some exercises. Do not think that you can be a composer. (Vincent McDermott, p.c., 6 August 2005)

According to McDermott, Koapaha says “this is in his heart, it resonates with him, twenty or thirty years later,” and that “he’s still fighting the battle against that.” In other words, Koapaha continues to struggle to free himself from the idea, lodged in his psyche by his teachers, that he lacks the authority to be a composer. That he has not had the opportunities to more fully engage in and learn from the musical culture he most values—which while not as historically distant as Mozart is distant nonetheless—has only increased his self-doubt.

While Koapaha certainly recognizes the ill-treatment he has suffered from his teachers, especially Suhascarya, he is not as critical of them, or of AMI/ISI in general, as one might expect. On the contrary, he spoke highly of Suhascarya. He declared that “his tradition was fantastic,” and when I asked him which tradition, he replied “whichever—he’s known as a walking dictionary,” and cited his knowledge of everything from the history of rock to gamelan. Instead, Koapaha, and to a certain extent his colleagues, have internalized the idea that they are the ones who lack authority. AMI/ISI has not facilitated, and in Koapaha’s case has thwarted, their access to the kind of experience that would increase their authority specifically as composers. They do not question the authority of AMI/ISI to the extent that those who have had such experience, and who have gained a greater perspective, do. Instead, like children of abusive or negligent parents, they continue, on some level, to seek that institution’s approval.
Tony Prabowo

Becoming Indonesia’s Most Successful Composer

The second figure I will discuss is Tony Prabowo (1956–), one of the group of students who studied at IKJ with Slamet Abdul Sjukur shortly after he returned to Indonesia in 1976. Prabowo is unambiguously the most successful and most highly regarded Western-oriented composer of that group, and indeed of his generation.29 Senior figures such as Sjukur and Suka Hardjana, who as we have seen were broadly critical of that generation, have singled him out as an exception. In a review of Suita 92, a concert of new works by Prabowo, Sjukur, Trisutji Kamal, and Marusya Nainggolan, Hardjana described Prabowo as “the youngest” and also “the most talented” (Hardjana 1992, in 2004b:331). Several years later, in a review of a performance of his works by the Canadian violist Stephanie Griffin, Hardjana proclaimed him to be “the most serious Indonesian composer at this moment!” (Hardjana [1998b?], in 2004a:325). Sjukur, when telling me about how he tends to work slowly, noted in a passing comment his admiration for “composers who can work quickly, like Tony Prabowo.” He added “and he’s good”—a simple, but rare unqualified expression of approval (Slamet Abdul Sjukur, p.c., 9 September 2005).

Prabowo has been fortunate to have his talent recognized by well-positioned cultural figures, leading to several high-profile performances of his work in Indonesia and abroad.

29. Prabowo’s has been successful mostly in terms of the number of commissions and performances of his work. His only commercially-released recording—Commonality, produced as both an audio CD and a DVD by the now-defunct SIAM Records—is of his work with the New Jakarta Ensemble, discussed below. Prabowo has also self-produced a professional quality double CD of his works for Western forces, with funding from the Sampoerna Foundation—the same foundation that funded the production of the Twilite Orchestra’s coffee-table book.
Two connections have been especially important. In 1996, Joel Sachs, a faculty member at the Juilliard School in New York, and director of the New Juilliard Ensemble and the school’s Focus! Festival, learned of Prabowo after seeking recommendations from cultural personnel at American Embassies in Pacific Rim countries. Sachs invited Prabowo to present his first major work for Western instruments, *Dongeng Sebelum Tidur* from 1992, and subsequently commissioned two other substantial works: “Autumnal Steps: Homage to Takemitsu” for chamber orchestra, which was premiered later in 1996; and his first opera, *The King’s Witch*, which was premiered in a concert version at Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall in New York in 2000 (Griffin 2003: 16-17), and subsequently as a fully staged production at TIM in Jakarta, with Sachs’s Continuum Ensemble, in 2006. Prabowo has also benefitted greatly from his ongoing working relationship with Goenawan Mohamad, a journalist and public intellectual best known as the founder and editor of *Tempo*, Indonesia’s leading weekly news magazine until it was banned by Suharto’s New Order regime in 1994. Also a poet, Mohamad has written texts for many of Prabowo’s work, including the libretto for *The King’s Witch* (ibid.:13).

As much as his talent, what sets Prabowo apart from most of his peers is the strength of his aesthetic focus. Prabowo is the one composer I know of who actually describes himself as Western-oriented, a fact reported by Stephanie Griffin in her study of his music (Griffin 2003: 16-17).

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31. For comments on *Tempo*’s significance, see Steele (2003). In addition to his work with *Tempo*, Mohamad has been an important supporter of the arts. After *Tempo* was shut down, Mohamad was involved in founding the artists’ community Teater Utan Kayu. Since 2008, he has been a curator for Komunitas Salihara, currently Jakarta’s leading independent contemporary arts center (http://salihara.org/about/curators, accessed 7 February 2013).
2003: 53), and corroborated by his colleague Michael Asmara (p.c., 27 May 2005). More specifically, Prabowo identifies with the high modernism of the mid-twentieth century avant-garde. In an interview and profile on “New Music from Indonesia”—a podcast run by a digital music distributor from 2006 to 2008 that mostly promoted Indonesia’s burgeoning indie pop scene—Prabowo, when asked to describe his music, explained that

Basically my music is influenced by Western contemporary music. So it’s—if you know about Arnold Schoenberg and two students of him, Alban Berg and Anton von Webern. And also other composers like Olivier Messiaen, or Boulez. (Episode 49 of New Music from Indonesia podcast, archived at http://www.equinoxdmd.com/podcast.html, accessed 26 July 2007)

In particular, Prabowo has idolized Pierre Boulez—or as he calls him, “Ayah Boulez” (ayah = father)—as “a symbol of something he believes his is not, and sometimes wishes he could become: a truly ‘modern’ man” (Griffin 2003: 21). He also found inspiration in the music of “Ayah Toru Takemitsu,” especially in his harmonic language (ibid.:66), as he signaled in the title of his chamber orchestra commission from Joel Sachs—which, in addition to directly paying homage to Takemitsu, referenced two of his more notable works.33 When I spoke with him in 2005, Prabowo expressed with pride how Chinese composers such as “Tan Dun, Qu Xiaosong, Zhou Long, Chen Yi” were so prominent in New York, as he discovered during the year he spent there, from October 1997 to April 1998, on a grant from the Asian Cultural Council. He even joked that New York’s new music scene might eventually “be controlled by China,” adding “If they are going to do it, good, OK” (p.c., 07 May 2005). He does not, then,

32. Ayah and bapak both mean father. They are both used as a term of address, but whereas Bapak or Pak is used generally for any older male, Ayah connotes an actual relationship.
33. Both of the works Prabowo references, “Autumn” and “November Steps,” are scored for shakuhachi, biwa, and orchestra. Prabowo’s own piece, as noted below, incorporated a large Javanese gong ageng.
look exclusively to European composers—though they seem to be the first that he mentions—but also identifies with Asian composers who have become fully vested members of an internationalized avant-garde.

**Nativism by Necessity**

I have at times wondered whether Prabowo might have focused exclusively on composing for Western instruments in a modernist idiom had it been possible for him to do so. As we will see, he seems at times to disavow his work for traditional instruments and musicians, though the integrity of that work suggests that he does in fact take it seriously. In any case, the question is hypothetical. As we will see, he would not have been able to sustain an exclusively Western-oriented focus within Indonesia, and although he has had more opportunities to spend time abroad than most of his peers, he has neither pursued formal studies during those trips, nor attempted to relocate for more than a year.

In the years after, and even during, his studies at IKJ (described in chapter 3), Prabowo, along with his colleagues who similarly left IKJ without graduating, engaged in a grab bag of musical activities. Griffin notes how Prabowo, Franki Raden, and others were trying, with varying amounts of success, to get “into ‘the Industry’” as arrangers, recording engineers, and producers (Griffin 2003: 10). Prabowo recounted assisting Raden on a number of his film projects, including *November 1828*.34 He also worked with Raden making orchestral arrangements for Guruh Sukarnoputra’s concert spectacle *Untukmu Indonesiaku!* (For You,

34. This is the film project described in chapter 3, for which Raden worked with students at ASKI Solo. Raden listed Prabowo as his assistant (Notosudirdjo 2001: 342-343), but when I spoke with Prabowo, he remembered little about this specific project.
My Indonesia!) (p.c., 07 May 2005). Prabowo was less indiscriminately enthusiastic about this work than his colleagues, however. In 2005, he still spoke highly of Sukarnoputra’s work, but according to Fahmi Alattas, at the time he was “highly selective about the jobs that he accepted” (Griffin 2003: 10). In general he has remained a fan of progressive rock, without any sense of irony, but he has not pursued this musical avenue himself since high school. He was a “self-professed ‘rocker’” then, with a taste for “black leather and blue nail polish” (ibid.:3), but since studying at IKJ he has cultivated a more serious image.

As Griffin observes, Prabowo instead “focused on collaborations with theater and dance” (Griffin 2003: 10). This allowed him to work within an art-oriented context, but it also drew him away from a singular focus on European-style modernism. His first collaborator, the choreographer Laksmi Simanjuntak, asked him on two of the four occasions they worked together to compose for Javanese instruments and musicians (ibid.:13). He continued to work with traditional instruments and musicians on subsequent collaborations. Among these was The Ritual of Soloman’s Children, a theater production by renowned Javanese dramaturge W. S. Rendra that was presented in New York in 1988, providing Prabowo with “his first major performance outside Indonesia” (ibid.:15). Prabowo’s music for this production was pre-recorded, and from comparing a recording I obtained with one of a prior collaboration with

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35. Guruh Sukarnoputra (1953–), who as his name indicates is the son of Indonesia’s first president, Sukarno, was the “foremost exponent of the gedongan style” (Frederick 1982: 125-126). As William Frederick explains in one of two brief acknowledgements of Sukarnoputra in English language scholarship, the term gedongan is “from gedung, or urban, concrete, multistory building.” In a “faddish dispute” on “university campuses,” gedonangan was opposed to that which was kampungan, a term roughly equivalent to “low-brow,” such as the far more popular genre dangdut—the main focus of Frederick’s article (Frederick 1982: 125-126). Sukarnoputra’s “grandiose pop spectaculars” (Perlman 1999: 3-4) involved large dance troupes in glittery costumes and orchestras, à la Las Vegas. Untukmu Indonesiaku! was also made into a film, and the music released as an album. A short clip from the film can be viewed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hszv6HydeJU (accessed 29 July 2014).
Simanjuntak, definite similarities are evident. A section for multiple *suling* may very well be taken directly from his *Music for 14 Sulings* composed for Simanjuntak’s 1987 production *Penangkapan Sukra*, for which Prabowo recorded multiple tracks played by Hendri Soedjatmiko (ibid.:119). This section starts with a shifting drone made up of different long tones, with simple flourishes, then cross-fades into a texture consisting of repeated sharply articulated bursts played in layers of different accelerating pulses, and then develops into a more varied texture with the addition of breathy gestures.

Neither this section of Prabowo’s music for Rendra nor most of the others employ traditional material—the final section, which features a solo female vocalist singing in what sounds to me like a traditional idiom from some part of Sumatra, paired with an octave drone sung by male vocalists, is the one exception. His music for the choreographer Sulistyo Tirtokusumo’s 1993 production *Panji Sepuh*, for nine *rebab*, three *gender*, and nine voices, which used an ensemble of performers placed throughout the performance space, was similarly non-traditional in style, from start to finish. But in neither of these pieces did Prabowo attempt to compose for traditional Indonesian instruments “in the pointilist style of European post-serialism,” as Raden did in his first failed attempt to compose for gamelan in 1975 (Notosudirdjo 2001: 340-342). The pieces have less to do with the astringent harmonic language or the expressionist gestures of high modernism, but instead bask in lush, mostly

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36. I was given a copy of Prabowo’s music for *The Ritual of Soloman’s Children* by my colleague Andrew Mertha, now in the Department of Government at Cornell, who happened to have worked on the production in New York as a technician. Stephanie Griffin gave me a recording of Prabowo’s “Music for Rebabs, Sulings, Voices, Genders and Gongs” from 1987.

37. I attended a performance of this production at Taman Budaya Surakarta in 1993—my first introduction to Prabowo’s music. In terms of musical content, apart from Prabowo’s originally composed music, the piece also involved traditional *macapat*. I obtained a copy of video documentation from the archives of TBS in 2005.
consonant, sustained but always shifting textures consisting of overlapping long tones on multiples of the same instrument, somewhat reminiscent of the drone based music of Terry Riley or La Monte Young—or perhaps more directly, the ambient music of Brian Eno.

This collaborative work, most of which was for traditional Javanese instruments, preceded his first significant pieces for European forces. In fact, his “Music for Flute, Clarinet and Piano” from 1980 is the only earlier piece in this category in the list of works in Griffin’s study (Griffin 2003: 149-152). His first major concert work, according to Griffin, was *Dongeng Sebelum Tidur*, for soprano and mixed ensemble—the 1992 work that, as noted above, earned Suka Hardjana’s praise, and secured his relationship with Joel Sachs. It was in this piece, and the commissions from Sachs that followed from it, that Prabowo was first able to fully explore and realize his aesthetic affinity with European-style modernism. In identifying with Schoenberg, Webern, Berg, Messiaen, and Boulez, he effectively disregards the twelve years in which he worked in quite a different style and with different means.

**The New Jakarta Ensemble and the Evolution of a Hybrid Style**

Even after the turn toward European-style modernism with *Dongeng Sebelum Tidur*, Prabowo continued, when asked to, or when it made sense, to compose for traditional instruments. In 1996, a commission from another choreographer, Linda Hoemar, prompted Prabowo to found the New Jakarta Ensemble. Prabowo worked extensively with this group for the next four years, involving them in *Empty Tradition/City of Peonies*, a major collaborative production with Chinese choreographer Yin Mei premiered at the Asia Society in New York in 1998,\(^\text{38}\) and *Kali*, his second opera, co-composed with American composer

\(^{38}\) It was the music from this production, along with excerpts of video documentation of the
Jarrad Powell (Griffin 2003: 37, 79-80).

The majority of the New Jakarta Ensemble’s members—five out of seven—were traditionally-based Minangkabau musicians. They had all trained at ASKI Padang Panjang in West Sumatra (ibid.:35-36), and would have engaged in the compositional experimentation that had been taking place there since the late 1980s, in parallel to that at ASKI Solo and other sister institutions, and prompted in part by the PKM.39 Through this training, and their association with the Minangkabau choreographer Gusmiati Suid—who as Griffin notes was “celebrated in Indonesia for her fusion of modern dance with traditional Minangkabau elements” (ibid.:36-37)—they were quite open to Prabowo’s compositional ideas. At the same time, their traditional background necessitated an approach that accommodated their lack of facility with notation. As with the process employed by traditionally-based composers of musik kontemporer—such as that developed at ASKI Solo, described in chapter 4—this approach involved working out material in rehearsal, in collaboration with the performers. Owing to his own orientation toward Western new music, Prabowo perhaps brought more preconceived ideas to the process than traditionally-based composers typically did, as is evident from Griffin’s description:

He [Prabowo] brings a design to rehearsals, but is flexible about the ways in which it materializes. After much experimentation and repetition, the ensemble creates something as close as possible to his original concept. Prabowo never explains this

production itself, that SIAM Records released on the New Jakarta Ensemble CD and DVD entitled Commonality.

39. Those involved in this experimentation at ASKI Padang Panjang used the term musik kontemporer, which “according to one account was imported after some individuals attended a composer’s festival in Jakarta in the 1980s” (Fraser 2007: 253). This would have been Achyar Adam, who participated in the sixth PKM in 1985 (Hardjana 1986: 379-386), and Hadjizar, who participated in the seventh in 1987 (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1987: 8). As Fraser explains, the more immediate motivation to experiment was the dominance of commercialized and Westernized forms of Minang music (Fraser 2007: 252-261).
concept to the group. At times he notates it as a graphic score, which the players do not see. (ibid.:41-42)

The players then “memorize the music once it is fully developed to Prabowo’s taste,” so that “what has its origin in a composer-directed improvisation becomes a fixed composition”—though as Griffin notes, pieces that are not performed for some time sometimes need to be “reconstructed from what each player can remember” (ibid.:43).

In contrast to the traditionally-based Minangkabau members, the other two members of the New Jakarta Ensemble have considerable skill as interpreters of notated music. The violist Stephanie Griffin, who completed her DMA at the Juilliard School in 2003, was invited to join after having worked with Prabowo during his visits to New York in the late 1990s. Nyak Ina Raseuki (1965–) is a vocalist who grew up as an “orang desa” (village person) in Aceh, surrounded by some traditional music but mostly “hiburan” and more recent popular genres. After studying classical piano from elementary through junior high school, and singing pop while finishing high school in Jakarta, she enrolled as a voice major at IKJ, where she was “poisoned” by Prabowo and another prominent composition student, Arjuna (Nyak Ina Raseuki, p.c., 18 August 2005).40

With the Minangkabau members, Prabowo favors non-melodic percussion instruments, or pitched instruments used “in a way that timbre and atmosphere are far more important than their pitch” (ibid.:44-45). Their parts, though created through a collaborative method similar to that devised by traditionally-based composers, stylistically resemble the gestural character of much avant-garde percussion music. This complements his writing for Griffin and

40. Griffin describes Arjuna, who was “five or six years [Prabowo’s] senior,” as “a keen intellect and avid reader” and his “most important mentor” at IKJ (Griffin 2003: 5). Marusya Nainggolan claimed that Arjuna was the real talent behind both Prabowo and Franki Raden (p.c., 20 May 2005).
Raseuki, which is specified in more detail, especially in terms of pitch material, and thus more directly connected to his aesthetic affinity with Schoenberg. Much of his viola writing is atonal, but not strictly serial. Contrary to Royke Koapaha’s assumption, Prabowo’s compositional approach is not systematic, at least not rigorously so, except in some of his earlier compositions. Instead, he strives for the impression and sound of atonality. He makes abundant use of sprechstimme in his vocal writing for Raseuki, another borrowing from Schoenberg.

Yet at the same time, Prabowo’s writing for Western instruments, whether in the context of the New Jakarta Ensemble, or his subsequent work, has departed from an exclusive focus on the “Schoenberg-inspired post-tonal language” of his works from the 1990s. He strikes a balance between atonal writing and the use of modes, mostly of his own invention. Some of these modes he describes as “Eastern-style”—though as Griffin observes, they are not apprehended as such by the traditional Indonesian musicians with whom Prabowo has worked. Prabowo also makes abundant use of what in Western art music would be termed ornamentation, but in his case “is an integral part of the line” (Griffin 2003: 91). With this, he appeals more specifically to an Indonesian model, arguing that whereas “in Bach, ornamentation is on a structure that is very clear,” in Javanese music “Eastern modal

41. What Koapaha was picking up on was Prabowo’s stylistic coherence. “Prabowo,” Griffin notes, “is already at the point where he can ‘improvise’ twelve tone rows.” He “did a little calculation in Autumnal Steps”—indeed, Griffin’s analysis identifies a twelve-tone row and its permutations, as well as rhythmic palindromes—“but not since” (Griffin 2003: 54-71). Nevertheless, it was through such work that Prabowo “applied himself assiduously to perfecting . . . aspects of his craft” such as “counterpoint, harmony and twelve-tone practices” as a “way of aligning himself with the legacy of Western composers” (Griffin 2003: 78).

42. Griffin describes how Musliwardinal, one of the members of the New Jakarta Ensemble, had “difficulty remembering” a melody in one of these modes. Not able to “understand it as a scale,” he instead “needed to memorize each interval.” Griffin notes, “from his perspective, what seems ‘modal’ to Western ears might as well be a twelve-tone row” (Griffin 2003: 25).
ornamentation is part of the structure” (Griffin 2003: 91). The ornamentation he uses, much of which he developed in collaboration with Raseuki—who though she studied traditional music as an ethnomusicologist was not steeped in a particular tradition herself—does not, however, conform to any specific traditional Indonesian idiom. Prabowo’s use of “frequent grace notes (some of which span large intervals), trills which start slowly and accelerate, trills of varying intervals (from a minor second to a major third), glissandi of various speeds, accelerating repeated notes sometimes ending in ululations and fast repeated notes on the same vowel, which he usually notates as tremolo” (Griffin 2003: 91-92) is instead more generally evocative of “Eastern” music. His “Eastern modal ornamentation” and his “Eastern-style” modes derive as much, or more, from his admiration of other “Eastern” composers such as Takemitsu and Chou Wen-Chung as they do from any particular traditional Indonesian music.

Selective Identifications

After the production of Prabowo and Jarrad Powell’s opera Kali in Seattle in 2000, the New Jakarta Ensemble began a “sabbatical.” Griffin, in her thesis, noted that this “sabbatical” seemed to be of indeterminate length, though Prabowo denied to both the media and members of the ensemble “allegations that the group has disbanded” (Griffin 2003:50). Still inactive in 2005, there was little doubt by then that the ensemble was effectively defunct. Prabowo had not, however, stopped collaborating with traditional musicians. He had established a working relationship with Syahrial, a younger Minangkabau musician who after studying in Bali, graduating from STSI Denpasar in 1996, had based himself in Jakarta. Prabowo and Syahrial were together credited as the “penata musik” (music arrangers) for a 2005 production by the
choreographer Jefriandi Usman, for which they composed for a small ensemble of Minang musicians.\textsuperscript{43} For another choreographer, they created a pre-recorded accompaniment consisting exclusively of Syahrial’s suling playing—which with its focus on non-pitched percussive sounds was even further removed from traditional idioms than that of Hendri Soedjatmiko, with whom Prabowo collaborated for his earlier work for dance.

I complimented Prabowo on this second piece with Syahrial after hearing a rehearsal. He responded by stating that “actually my music is more for Western instruments” (p.c., 27 May 2005). In terms of number of compositions, this is not factually true; in the list of works included as an appendix in Griffin’s thesis, including those for choir, only about a third are for Western forces (Griffin 2003:149-152).\textsuperscript{44} Similarly, his statement that his music is like that of European high-modernists like Schoenberg, Webern, Berg, Messiaen, and Boulez does not account for the full range of his compositional output. Certainly, his engagement with atonal expressionism is a core aspect of his musical style. Slamet Abdul Sjukur related how early on in his studies Prabowo became especially “infatuated” with Schoenberg’s \textit{Pierrot Lunaire}, and how even as he assimilated other stylistic input it remained a primary point of reference (Slamet Abdul Sjukur, p.c., 20 August 2005). But as we have seen, this other input was substantial. His earlier collaborative work is more reminiscent of minimalism than it is of high modernism, and since the late 1990s he has incorporated into his writing for Western instruments some of the generically “Eastern” characteristics he developed in his work with

\textsuperscript{43} The production, produced by Taboosay Body Motions Dance Company, was titled \textit{Jalan Panjang Tubuh \& Pikiranku}. I did not see the performance, but obtained a copy of the program from the lighting designer, M. Aidil.

\textsuperscript{44} Twenty-one out of the sixty items in Griffin’s list are for Western instruments or Western-style choir. A number of others, such as nine works composed for Nyak Ina Raseuki as vocalist, are not easily categorized as Western or Indonesian. For seven works for theater and two soundtracks, Griffin does not indicate instrumentation.
Nyak Ina Raseuki and the New Jakarta Ensemble.

The discrepancy between how Prabowo sees himself as a composer—or how he would like to be seen—and the actual stylistic diversity of his music stems in part from his lack of a way with words. As Griffin notes, Prabowo “essentially is not a ‘language person’” (Griffin 2003: 90). She cites Raseuki, who describes him, in somewhat essentializing terms, as “an inward looking, inarticulate person very much nurtured by the non-verbalness of Javanese culture” (Nyak Ina Raseuki, quoted in Griffin 2003: 90). When I met with Raseuki, she complained to me about how Prabowo is “brilliant,” but “has no opinions,” clarifying that what she meant was that he was unable to articulate his ideas verbally, whether philosophical or even simply explaining how his music should be performed (Nyak Ina Raseuki, p.c., 18 August 2005).

More fundamentally, however, the disjuncture between Prabowo’s most explicit declarations of identity on the one hand, and his musical work and passing comments on the other, is a response to various expectations and assumptions, from various sources, some specific and some general, regarding the kind of music he ought to be composing. As Griffin observes, in his fascination with the music of Schoenberg,

Prabowo was excited about discovering music that many Western composers were already trying to escape. He had the advantage of hearing Schoenberg, Webern, Berg, Stravinsky, Messiaen and others with fresh ears—uncorrupted by what he probably should have learned in school. (Griffin 2003: 53)

Griffin presumably refers here to the expectation that contemporary composers be up to date with more recent aesthetic developments. Sjukur addresses this point from a somewhat different angle, in commenting that most young Indonesian composers do not listen broadly enough. This is not just because they are not serious enough about their studies, as Hardjana
charged, but at least as much because they have limited opportunities to expose themselves to new music. Sjukur brought up Prabowo as an exception, due to his frequent trips abroad (Slamet Abdul Sjukur, p.c., 20 August 2005).

Prabowo did indeed listen broadly, and not just to contemporary art music composers such as Toru Takemitsu and Walter Zimmerman, two names mentioned by Sjukur. He also remained a huge fan of progressive rock, considering it an important and enduring influence on his music, and thought it “a pity” that Sjukur was “not involved with rock music” (Prabowo, quoted and paraphrased in Griffin 2003: 8-9). Within the realm of new music—a realm which was not uniformly more influential, but that on a certain level counted most—Prabowo encountered much during his time in the United States. In a program note, he defended his choice to compose for multi-tracked solo performers by referring to the use of this technique by Steve Reich and by “postmodern composers such as Laurie Anderson” (Tony Prabowo, quoted in Griffin 2003: 121). Yet as Griffin notes, he claims to “have no influence from American composers,” who to him are “John Cage and Morton Feldman”—two more senior and authoritative figures.45

**Counterbalancing Aesthetic Authorities**

The question remains: why has Prabowo been so fixated on the older style of new music

45. Griffin also notes that Prabowo “was listening to a piece for multi-tracked bassoons by the American composer Paul Dresher in June 1999 when he resolved to write his first piece for multiple violas.” Stylistically, Prabowo’s piece was unrelated to Dresher’s, and thus he denied that it was a source of inspiration, though he was clearly interested in Dresher’s technique (Griffin 2003: 121-122). Rather than adopting Dresher’s model wholesale, however, Prabowo’s compositions for multi-tracked solo performers can be seen as an outgrowth of his earlier work for traditional instruments for his collaborations with choreographers, which involved pre-recording multiple tracks or tones by a single performer, as well as composing for multiples of the same instrument. Those pieces, composed before his first trip to the US, as noted above, are more reminiscent of the drone based music of Terry Riley or La Monte Young than they are of the pattern-based minimalism of Steve Reich.
Indonesian composers would have been. Though School's divide Allice was "downtown" Bang on a Can festival;46 Prabowo had, in fact, participated in two meetings to try and establish a contemporary music festival that would include jazz and gamelan as well as "contemporary classical music" (p.c., 7 August 2005). Instead, Prabowo's concern with aesthetic authority manifests itself in his concern with the kind of compositional technique that the Schoenbergian style demands. As Griffin observes, Prabowo has incorporated "counterpoint, harmony and twelve-tone practices into his compositions" as a "way of aligning himself with the legacy of Western composers," and he has applied himself assiduously to perfecting these aspects of his craft" (Griffin 2003: 78).

46. Ironically, by identifying with Schoenberg Prabowo aligns himself with the roots of what became a post-tonal orthodoxy in the American new music scene, associated with the "uptown" rather than the "downtown" side of the aesthetic divide that emerged in New York starting in the 1960s (Gann 2006). The Bang on a Can festival was founded in 1987 to provide a platform for some of those on the "downtown" side. Though vestiges of the divide remain, by the mid-1990s, when Prabowo’s music was first performed in New York, "downtown" music had, with Bang on a Can holding its festival at Allice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center from 1994 through 1998 (Brackett 2002: 212-213), broached the divide and established a significant presence uptown. The inclusion of Prabowo in the Juilliard School’s 1996 Focus! Festival is itself a sign of the softening of the exclusivity of the "uptown" side—though given his predilections, Prabowo was far less of a challenge to "uptown" aesthetics than most Indonesian composers would have been.
Prabowo’s aesthetic choices, and his declarations regarding what kind of composer he is, are also, I would argue, driven by a certain anxiety about his artistic identity. He is, Griffin notes, “painfully aware of the paradoxes surrounding his role as an 'Indonesian composer' abroad and as a ‘Western-oriented’ composer in Indonesia.” He has faced what Griffin describes as the widespread assumption that “Indonesian composers must, by definition, specialize in gamelan” (ibid.:21)—an assumption that his second trip to the United States would have invited. In 1994, four years after accompanying Rendra to New York, and two years before returning for the 1996 Focus! Festival at the Juilliard School, Prabowo went to Seattle to collaborate with the Jarrad Powell on a contemporary wayang production titled Visible Religion that involved the Javanese dhalang Sri Joko Raharjo, the Balinese dalang I Made Sidia, and the ensemble Powell directs, Gamelan Pacifica (ibid.:15). Prabowo defied expectations, however, by focusing on voices and non-melodic instruments and composing a “prerecorded soundscape of multiple terompets.” He thus lent “more of a ‘Western’ contemporary flavour” to a production that otherwise consisted of actual traditional repertoire and pieces in a traditional style by Powell (ibid.:31). For his subsequent collaborative projects in the US—the 1998 production of Empty Tradition/City of Peonies and the initial 2000 version of his opera Kali, a continuation of his work with Powell—Prabowo again found himself associated with traditional Indonesian music by working with the Minang musicians of the New Jakarta Ensemble.

Prabowo admitted at one point that “I don’t really feel comfortable with the New Jakarta Ensemble” (Prabowo, quoted in Griffin 2003: 50). That he has established a working relationship with Syahrial suggests that his discomfort has more to do with differences in aesthetic outlook or personality than it does with collaborating with traditional musicians per
Most of all, however, his discomfort seems to have to do with being identified too closely with the New Jakarta Ensemble. Prabowo made the above quoted comment after relating to Griffin how Sjukur, who thought highly of all his work, nevertheless advised him “only to send music with traditional instruments” to a curator from Darmstadt. Prabowo sent the curator a CD of the New Jakarta Ensemble, but then declined to accept an invitation to meet (ibid.).

Griffin suggests that Prabowo’s “attitude towards tradition” is “sometimes misinterpreted as snobbery or even scorn,” but argues that it is actually “one of caution and deep respect” (Griffin 2003: 29). In composing for gamelan instruments he has “become an expert at avoiding the conventions of Javanese gamelan”—though he did, as Ann Warde points out, incorporate both a large Javanese gong ageng and “a Javanese-gamelan-derived cyclical rhythmic framework” in the outer movements of his orchestral piece “Autumnal Steps” (Warde 2002: 126-130). He seems to have little to say about Javanese karawitan or other traditional Indonesian music itself; his “deep respect” manifests itself instead in critical comments about others who, in his opinion, mistreat traditional music in their creative work. He was “appalled” that Jarrad Powell, as part of his contribution to their co-composed opera

47. For his part, Epi Martison, the “unofficial leader of the five traditional Minang players” (Griffin 2003: 48), noted that although he learned much from working with Prabowo, in the end they were “not compatible,” Prabowo, he said, wanted to be “high class,” whereas Martison preferred the unpretentiousness of “kampung people.” Martison by no means entirely avoids cultural spheres inhabited primarily by high society; I saw him lead a group listed as “Papua instrumentalis” that provided the instrumental accompaniment to an arrangement of David Fanshawe’s African Sanctus performed by the Indonesian Youth Choir on a concert of the Nusanatara Symphony Orchestra on 8 June 2005. But he is more interested in working with isolated ethnic groups in the pedalaman (hinterlands) of Kalimantan and Sumatra (Epi Martison, p.c., 15 August 2005). On another occasion, Martison joked that he preferred the designation “musik aneh-aneh” (odd music) to musik kontemporer, which he considered “too elitist” (p.c., 25 May 2005). Syahrial, from my conversation with him (p.c., 21 June 2005), and from observing some of his work with his ensemble Metadomus, including a self-released CD (no date) and a performance in Jogja on 3 July 2005 as part of a four-city Indonesian tour, seems, by contrast, more intent on advancing his own career as a composer.
Kali, asked Musliwardinal, a member of the New Jakarta Ensemble, to sing a Minang song as a countermelody to a Javanese-style melody Powell himself had composed, effectively presenting traditional material as his own, and displaying a lack of sensitivity both to Musliwardinal’s discomfort with the situation, and the fact that the traditions are completely unrelated (Griffin 2003: 31-32). A piece by Lou Harrison he heard performed by Gamelan Son of Lion “pained and bored him,” and he objected that “it was little more than a transcription of Javanese music, masquerading as ‘new music’ in the West” (ibid.:29).

Regarding a rather different example, when discussing a number of different Indonesian artists with myself, Michael Asmara, and Sapto Raharjo, Prabowo told me the artist who made him “most sad”—that is, whose music he disapproved of most strongly—was Irwansyah Harahap. He did not present a fully articulated critique, but from his comments he seems to have found Harahap’s inclusion in a single performance of disparate genres—an acoustic performance of gambus, music inspired by the qawwali music that he had learned from Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan while studying ethnomusicology at the University of Washington, and electric sitar in the style of John McLaughlin—a random and unconvincing hodgepodge (p.c., 7 August 2005).

What Prabowo objects to is not the use of traditional material per se. Nor is he necessarily opposed to musicians engaging in musical traditions that are not their own, whether in performance, or in transforming them in the creation of new music. He is, in a

48. Gambus is the term for various types of lute, some of them closely resembling the Middle Eastern 'ūd.

49. English jazz guitarist who worked extensively with North and South Indian musicians such as tabla virtuoso Zakir Hussain.

50. Prabowo was presumably referring to Harahap’s audio CD Rites of Passage (Harahap 2002).
sense, himself engaged in this latter project, in composing for traditional Indonesian instruments and musicians. Nor is he biased against popular styles. Prabowo had also arranged pieces by McLaughlin’s Mahavishnu Orchestra for a short-lived chamber orchestra he led while studying at IKJ (Griffin 2003: 6-7).

The common denominator in the critiques cited above is the use of traditional or quasi-traditional material by those who have not mastered the traditions they draw upon. He could accept Powell’s work for Javanese gamelan—at least enough that he agreed to collaborate with him on Visible Religion—but not of his use of Minang music, a tradition Powell had no prior experience with. This position involves, of course, assessing the extent of someone’s mastery. In the case of Harahap, Prabowo could only have intuited his less than thorough grasp of qawwali or Hindustani improvisation. But with Powell too Prabowo is making judgements based more on impressions than his own knowledge, except that in the case of Powell Prabowo overestimates his mastery. Prabowo has praised Powell’s ability as a gamelan player (p.c., 07 May 2005), but in fact Powell has only a modest knowledge of traditional karawitan. Prabowo is not “pure urban” to the extent that Royke Koapaha, Haryo “Yose” Suyoto, or Budi Ngurah are. But neither did he grow up fully immersed in Javanese culture. He was born in Malang, a moderately large city in East Java, and moved with his family to Jogja when he was twelve. His parents “had a traditional Javanese outlook,” but as priyayi—both of his parents had noble titles—they spoke Dutch at home, and listened to popular Dutch songs from the 1940s and 50s (Griffin 2003: 1-2). He would have had some passive exposure to gamelan, but did not learn to play it—at least not until he got to IKJ, at which point he studied some Balinese gamelan with I Wayan Sadra (I Wayan Sadra, p.c., 23 July 2004).
Javanese gamelan is Prabowo’s tradition in the sense that he is Javanese. But in practical terms it is far less his tradition than it is Powell’s. Traditional Minangkabau music is his only in so far as it has come to be understood as the cultural property of all Indonesians. Prabowo has found ways to work with Javanese instruments, and Javanese and Minangkabau musicians, but fundamentally, he remains an outsider to these traditions. Both the approach and the results of his collaborations bear some resemblance to that of traditionally-based composers from Solo. But although he was impressed with this music when he first heard it at the PKM meetings in the 1980s—he recounted how he was “so surprised,” how it “made me open my eyes” to the possibility of “contemporary music from tradition” (p.c., 7 August 2005)—his appreciation only goes so far. According to Raseuki, he finds their pieces “formless”—though “he’s scared to say [so]” (Nyak Ina Raseuki, p.c., 18 August 2005). In speaking with me, he admitted to disliking the music that Supanggah had composed for I La Galigo, a major theater production directed by Robert Wilson inspired by the Sureq Galigo epic of the Bugis people of South Sulawesi.51 In his comments, he drew comparisons with Western-oriented composers from East Asia such as Takemitsu, and asked me “what the system of education was” at ASKI (p.c., 06 May 2005), betraying his lack of a sense of where those composers were coming from.

Prabowo’s engagement with traditional Indonesian instruments and musicians has, since early on, been a centrally important aspect of his compositional work. It has been encouraged by, and also provided, pivotal opportunities to advance his career, and it has profoundly shaped his compositional voice. Yet in speaking about himself as a composer, he emphasizes the Western-oriented, and more specifically the Schoenbergian, facet of his artistic persona.

51. See Weiss (2008) for a discussion of this production.
To be sure, he has a deeply felt aesthetic affinity with this style that is evident in his writing for Western instruments. But his emphasis on this facet to the exclusion of others has a different motivation. He foregrounds it, I would argue, because it most effectively counterbalances the aesthetic authority of traditional Indonesian music. This is an authority that is more deeply rooted and more widely recognized in Indonesia. But it is also one that he is unable to fully draw upon, as he does not himself have a foundation in traditional music. He is careful, in harnessing the expertise of his collaborators who do have such a foundation, to compose in an idiom that avoids evoking traditional models and that instead reflects his own compositional sensibility, and he can be highly critical of work that is too directly derivative. The authority of the Western art music tradition is unassailable, but it is only deeply understood, especially in its modernist manifestations, by a small circle of Indonesians. That circle has a critically important influence in the cultural sphere within which Prabowo works, and has been crucial in supporting Prabowo’s growth and activity as a composer. Nevertheless, its broader influence in Indonesia is circumscribed. The real source of Western art music’s authority lies elsewhere. And so, despite his status as the most successful and acclaimed Western-oriented composer of his generation, Prabowo is not immune to anxiety—anxiety born of a distance from both of the major sources of aesthetic authority that figure in his compositional universe.
Michael Asmara

Overcoming Obstacles, Seizing Opportunities

The third and final figure I will profile is Michael Asmara (1956–). A classmate of Royke Koapaha at AMI Jogja, Asmara experienced many similar difficulties. He too faced disapproval from AMI’s director, Suhascarya, who happened to be his granduncle. Suhascarya was “angry” at Asmara for applying to AMI, presumably because Suhascarya did not consider him sufficiently qualified, but in the end “couldn’t say anything” because Asmara was accepted, after studying privately for a year, by other instructors. Asmara started in 1980. He got along with some of his instructors well—he spoke fondly of a visiting American teacher who taught him serial counterpoint, along with the baroque counterpoint that he was hired to teach. But with others, he was “often in conflict,” and he found himself “marginalized in the campus circle.” That, on top of not being able to afford tuition, led him to drop out before graduating, in 1983.

Despite these problems, Asmara has fared much better than others in his cohort. His success in advancing his career as a composer did not come as readily as it did for Tony Prabowo, with whom he has been friends since they attended high school in Jogja. As he put it, Prabowo and others at IKJ were “much more advanced” because of the greater resources available to them in Jakarta; Asmara specifically noted their proximity “to the embassies,” presumably meaning those of countries where contemporary art music had a more vigorous

52. Except where noted otherwise, all quotations in this section are taken from conversations with Michael Asmara in 2004 and 2005, and all discussions of particular pieces are based on digital copies of recordings and photocopies of scores obtained directly from the composer.
existence. Equally important was the possibility of making connections with powerful and influential figures in the Jakarta arts scene, whether those associated with the Jakarta Arts Council, those on the planning committee of the Art Summit Indonesia, or other more singular forces such as Goenawan Mohamad.

Prabowo, as we saw, was collaborating with leading figures in Jakarta’s contemporary art scene by the late 1980s, and by 1996 had made the connection with Joel Sachs at the Juilliard School that so significantly boosted his career, especially in terms of writing for Western instruments. A similar break for Asmara, through which he gained broader recognition for his work, did not come until 2003, when his “String Quartet No. 2” was performed at the Asian Music Festival in Tokyo, that year’s official conference/festival of the Asian Composers League (ACL). His work has been performed at two subsequent ACL meetings, in Bangkok in 2005 and in Taiwan in 2011, but it wasn’t until the 2011 meeting, with funding from the Asian Cultural Council, that he was able to travel to attend the performances of his work.

When I asked Asmara in 2004 if he had ever been to an ACL meeting outside Indonesia, he told me that “only elite composers went,” by which he meant those who are “based in Jakarta” or that were on the board of the Asosiasi Komponis Indonesia (Indonesian Composers Association, AKI). Founded in 1994, the organization was at its peak in 1999 when it hosted the ACL’s meeting in Solo and Jogja. Asmara did attend that event, but wasn’t invited to participate, despite having been invited to AKI’s earlier planning meeting. While

53. Asmara was perhaps also thinking of cultural centers such as the Erasmus Huis and the Goethe Institut, which as noted in chapter 3 were an important source of recordings of contemporary art music. The embassies themselves also at times played an important role. As noted above, it was an American Embassy staff member who recommended Prabowo to Joel Sachs, leading to one of the most important breaks in his career. The Lembaga Indonesia Prancis, the Indonesian operation of the Institut français, has an office in Jogja that, at least recently, been supportive of musik kontemporer activity there.
other Indonesian participants in subsequent ACL meetings went “through AKI,” Asmara first participated after Jack Body—about whom Asmara had heard stories while a student at AMI, but didn’t meet until the 1999 ACL meeting in Jogja, and didn’t really get to know until 2003—recommended that Asmara send one of his pieces after hearing his piece for three Javanese gender at the 2002 Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival.

Asmara said of the tendency for “elite” composers to monopolize limited opportunities that he “can understand.” “They want to develop,” he noted. Jack Body “passes on commissions to promising students,” but “that never happens here.” “Indonesians, if there's money, without a doubt they do it themselves. If there's not, only then do they offer it to someone else.” This was a pattern he had already “memorized,” and because he understood it, it did not make him angry. “The Philippines is similar,” he added, observing that the senior composer Jose Maceda “goes every time there is an ACL, by himself,” and suggested, laughing, that this was a “factor of developing countries.”

Whether or not this is a fair generalization, it is true that Asmara’s breaks have come mostly from non-Indonesians. In 2003, the same year that his “String Quartet No. 2” was first performed at the ACL after acting on Jack Body’s encouragement, Body invited him to New Zealand to have the work performed at a contemporary music festival there and to give a workshop for composers. He also travelled to Osaka, Japan, to work with Gamelan Marga Sari to realize “Niji,” a piece commissioned by the ensemble’s director, Shin Nakagawa, that I discuss further below.

**Asmara as Activist: Founding and Directing the Yogyakarta Contemporary Music Festival**

Asmara has also boosted his stature by taking on the role of an organizer—or, as Slamet
Abdul Sjukur put it, speaking of himself, an “activist,” explaining that “in Indonesia it is not enough to be a composer; one has to make programs of *musik kontemporer*” (Slamat Abdul Sjukur, p.c., 09 September 2004). In 2004 Asmara founded the Yogyakarta Contemporary Music Festival (YCMF), which to date has been held seven times. The festival’s programs have included pieces by well established Indonesian composers, such as Otto Sidharta and I Wayan Gde Yudane,54 and also Sjukur, the “father” of *musik kontemporer* himself. But in contrast to an event like the triennial Art Summit Indonesia—which in keeping with its name focuses on artists considered to be at the peak of their fields, dedicating whole programs to composers like Sjukur, Prabowo, Hardjana, Supanggah, Sadra, and Suwardi—the YCMF has prioritized inclusivity and building interest in *musik kontemporer* among the youth who will ensure its future vitality. Many of the thirty to forty participants in each of the 2008, 2009, and 2010 festivals were younger composers. The statements on the YCMF website for these three events highlight the importance of cultivating not only young composers, but also young performers and young listeners. The YCMF encourages “appreciation and understanding of contemporary music,” not only through “performances,” but also “discussions,” “educational activities,” and “music students’ interaction with noted composers, performers, and scholars.” The YCMF has sought to provide young performers with opportunities to discover “techniques of how to explore their instruments along with musical interpretations,” and to allow young composers to gain “deeper knowledge about musical style and form in addition to the ideological and aesthetic background of their

54. Yudane (1964–), a Balinese composer who studied with Slamet Abdul Sjukur at IKJ in the mid-1980s, has created electronic music that is “ambivalent toward high-low, pop-serious” distinctions (McGraw 2004:363-364). He has also won numerous awards for his *kreasi baru*, compositions for Balinese *gamelan gong kebyar*. 
works.”

The focus of the YCMF on community-building is apparent also in their approach to including international participants. Where from the outset the Art Summit has featured international figures of considerable stature, such as Kaija Saariaho and Alvin Lucier, both of whom presented programs at the 1998 event, the YCMF, since its inaugural 2004 event, has mostly focused on the work of composers based in Jogja, with a smaller number of pieces by those from abroad, like myself, who happened to be in Indonesia at the time. There was something of a shift in 2007 with the inclusion of works by some of the most highly esteemed (and in some cases deceased) composers from Japan and Korea, such as Isang Yun, Joji Yuasa, Toshi Ichiyanagi, and none other than Toru Takemitsu himself. The shift was facilitated by, and perhaps directly the result of, the participation of the Japanese violinist Rieko Suzuki, whom Jack Body had heartily promoted while he was in Jogja two years earlier, in 2005. Regardless of how the inclusion of works by these composers came about, it served “to fully as possible inform the musicians and audience of Yogyakarta about current ideas, theories and concepts inside the musical world—especially in Asia.”

But no less important than exposure to the work of leading Asian composers was facilitating more immediate interaction. This aim was identified explicitly with the 2009 and 2010 festivals, which noted an emphasis—or in 2010, an exclusive focus—on “programming works by composers we know personally.” The goal was “to ensure . . . that the work between them, the young Indonesian composers and performers will be as optimal and instructive as possible—whether it is by direct contact or through email.”

55. “Current” in this case is relative, as all of those figures had risen to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s, and Takemitsu and Yun had both passed away in the mid 1990s.
In directing the YCMF, Asmara has thus been less singularly focused on artistic excellence, and more concerned with giving opportunities to young composers and performers. This is not to say, however, that he is without his own ambitions. The statement for the second YCMF in 2005 rather boldly declared that “Yogyakarta has now become the centre of development of contemporary Art Music.”\textsuperscript{56} Whether or not that was a fair claim at that point, after seven events the YCMF has established itself as the most significant Indonesian festival of \textit{musik kontemporer} in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The foundation for its success is the enthusiasm Asmara has been able to generate among the composers who participate, as well as the team he has assembled to plan and carry out the festival’s various activities—a team that is not hidden behind the scene, but integral to it.

The extent to which it has grown and thrived, however, has much to do with Asmara’s efforts to strengthen connections to a network of influential figures within Jogja, between Jogja and other centers in Indonesia (most notably Jakarta), and much further afield. For the 2005 YCMF, Asmara assembled a “steering committee” with other prominent figures in the Jogja arts scene, such as the Dean of the Performing Art Faculty at ISI, Triyono Bramantyo, and the director of the Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival, Sapto Raharjo (who is profiled in the next chapter), as well as Shin Nakagawa and Jack Body. At the next YCMF, in 2007, the Jakarta-based composer Otto Sidharta, who was the chair of AKI, joined the “executive committee.” The three subsequent festivals in 2008, 2009, and 2010 were organized in cooperation with Cantus Music Centre, a music school and concert production organization in Jakarta that Sidharta directs, as well as the Lembaga Indonesia Prancis and the graduate program of ISI Jogja (Pasca Sarjana ISI Yogyakarta), which were the venues for the concerts,

\textsuperscript{56} Presumably Asmara means within the scope of Indonesia.

Asmara has not blatantly used the YCMF as a vehicle to advance his own career as a composer; he has not presented his own works at the festival since the inaugural 2004 event. Nevertheless, he has benefitted from the increased attention that being the YCMF’s director has brought him. In a profile that appeared in The Jakarta Post around the 2009 YCMF, he told his interviewer that he started the YCMF because he was “lonely” and “needed friends.” More specifically, he desired a community of like-minded musicians who shared his interest in contemporary art music. The YCMF has done much to galvanize and build such a community. Other named entities have formed: the Independent Composers Community Yogyakarta, the group of composers that Asmara rallied to produce the YCMF, but that claims to also be “active in producing audio-visual documentation, as well as publishing music scores and journals”; and the Yogyakarta Contemporary Music Ensemble (YCME), which has ventured beyond the YCMF to perform in other Indonesian cities, and, in 2011, to a new music festival in Izmir, Turkey. As a quartet of flute, violin, cello, and piano, the YCME is, to my knowledge, the first permanent Western chamber type ensemble dedicated to contemporary art music, and its level of performance is impressively high.

Asmara’s considerable contributions to the life of musik kontemporer in Jogja, and

58. I have not yet ascertained how much of this the ICCY has actually done. Its page on vimeo.com features only two videos, both of pieces by Asmara (http://vimeo.com/user6549580, accessed 21 February 2013).
Indonesia, have also led to specific opportunities for himself. As the artistic director and manager of the YCME, he has benefitted directly from its activities; his “Quartet” was one of eleven pieces the ensemble presented in Turkey. Asmara was commissioned by the Dutch pianist Kees Wieringa shortly after he performed and gave a workshop at the 2005 YCMF. He secured funds from the Asian Cultural Council (ACC) to bring three musicians from other parts of Asia to the 2010 YCMF, and then a year later received travel funds himself, enabling him to go to Taiwan in 2011 to finally hear his work performed at a meeting of the ACL.  

In 2009 Asmara went to Malaysia for the Goethe Institut’s Young Composers in Southeast Asia Competition and KL Contemporary Music Festival ’09 in Kuala Lumpur. He was not himself involved in the competition or the festival at that point—Indonesia was represented by Otto Sidharta, Tony Prabowo, and Slamet Abdul Sjukur—but went to observe. At that festival he befriended Kee Yong Chong, a rising star in Malaysia’s new music scene. The next time the Goethe Institut competition was held, in conjunction with the Southeast Asian Contemporary Music Festival in Bandung in 2011, Asmara was invited to join Chong and others on the jury by its artistic director, Dieter Mack (p.c. via e-mail, 15 February 2013)—another “activist,” mentioned at various points in this study, who made his biggest impact on the musik kontemporer scene in Bandung. In 2013, Asmara represented Indonesia in a project that paired Studio musikFabrik, a fifteen member new music ensemble from Cologne, Germany, with the fifteen member ASEAN Contemporary Music Ensemble,  

61. Kee Yong Chong (1971–) studied at the Xian Conservatory in China and the Brussels Royal Conservatory in Belgium, and has attended master classes by Brian Ferneyhough, Daan Manneke and Salvatore Sciarrino. He has received prizes from numerous international competitions, and several prestigious commissions, including one from the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation (http:/ /www.chongkeeyong.com, accessed 21 February 2013).
which was founded by Chong and others after the 2011 festival in Bandung. Asmara’s commissioned work, “Etude for Orchestra,” was the one piece on the program, performed in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Bangkok, for the combined forces of both ensembles. 62

Asmara has credited the Independent Composers Community Yogyakarta with conceiving and executing the YCMF, but it is Asmara himself who is recognized as the driving force behind it. It is Asmara who was profiled following the 2009 YCMF in an article in The Jakarta Post. The opportunities detailed above have followed in various ways from the stature he has gained through his considerable efforts in the service of community.

A Sometimes Experimentalist Modernist

Underlying Asmara’s steadfast commitment to the work of directing and running a festival and an ensemble is a clarity of aesthetic focus that is exceptional relative to most Western-oriented Indonesian composers. His focus is comparable to, and compatible with, that of Tony Prabowo, both sharing a predilection for musical idioms of the mid-twentieth century avant-garde. But as with Prabowo, this has not been a singular focus. Asmara’s output does include numerous works for conventional Western instruments and ensembles, including ten pieces for piano and three for string quartet—some of which he wrote without any foreseeable opportunity to have them performed. Most of these pieces, though not all, bear the hallmarks of high modernism: atonal melodic writing, with a preponderance of “dissonant” intervals such as tritones, major sevenths, and minor ninths, and at most fleeting suggestions of tonal centers; a fluid approach to rhythm, with musical gestures detached from any sense of meter or pulse; exaggerated dynamic contrasts, with changes between or

62. E-mail announcement from Kee Yong Chong, 21 December 2012.
crescendi and decrescendi over single notes and motifs; in his string writing, frequent changes of articulation and tone through bow position or the use of harmonics. But just as many of his pieces, again like Prabowo, admit other stylistic influences. This is especially true of those for less conventional forces.

A number of Asmara’s works relate as much or more to the experimentalisms introduced in the 1970s by Slamet Abdul Sjukur and, more immediately for those in Jogja, Jack Body. As noted above, Asmara did not meet Body until 1999, but felt his impact nonetheless through the cohort of student composers that had studied with him. Especially significant were Yoesbar Djelani, whose “Tanya Yang Tak Terjawab” Asmara performed in at the third PKM in 1982, and Haryo “Yose” Suyoto, who continued the “home concerts” started by Djelani (chapter 3). In 1988, six years after performing in Djelani’s piece, Asmara composed a “multimedia” piece in a similar vein. Titled “The Resistance of Substance,” the piece included children making “crying” and “crying-singing noises” and adults making “fighting noises.” The piece also used a number of motorcycles, radios, and sirens, along with a gender, three kentongan (a log-drum sounded as an alarm), a pesindhen, and a tenor.

Like Sutanto, in the “happening” that he presented at the first PKM in 1979, Asmara has incorporated audience participation in several compositions, though usually in a more controlled fashion. In a piece for gamelan instruments I observed at the 2004 Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival, he signaled the audience to clap once when he raised a candle to his left, and three times when he raised it to his right. The audience played a more prominent role in his “Gending Dolanan,” presented at the Nur Gora Rupa festival in 1994.63 In addition to

63. My discussion is based on video documentation I obtained from the archives of TBS, and a copy of the score I obtained from Asmara.
signaling different sections of those seated to shout, cheer, and whistle—who at various points were illuminated by a spotlight used primarily to highlight a solo female dancer—Asmara asked volunteers to play several different gamelan instruments distributed throughout the performance space, instructing them to improvise on specified pitches when he cued them to do so. The dancer also stopped dancing at various points to play. One other volunteer acted as a conductor, giving cues by lifting lamps with one or both hands when instructed to do so by Asmara, who stood in the middle of the performance space with a score, which indicated simply the sequence of entrances and exits.

Contrasting with the sometimes rowdy contributions from the audience was a slow and measured part for piano. While the other parts came in and out, the pianist steadily built up two alternating figures, starting with the same single pitch with which both figures began, sounded every 10 seconds, then gradually adding notes, one by one, repeating each pair of figures three times before adding another note. The notation for the part consists simply of dots on and around a line, indicating contour and approximate timing, and a note specifying the pitches to be used. Reminiscent in its chromaticism and pacing of the piano music of Morton Feldman, the unfolding of a clearly defined process has more in common with younger “minimalist” composers, such as Philip Glass—whose music, which he heard via a cassette from a visiting dance student from the Netherlands, inspired some of Asmara’s earlier piano pieces.

**Identity and Agency**

A more intensive source of influence who Asmara encountered somewhat later was Philip Corner (1933–). Corner has employed certain techniques of repetition and process associated
with minimalism, but more significantly, as an early member of the international art movement Fluxus, he was involved in the more resolutely experimentalist forms of conceptual art and performance art. In New Jersey in the mid 1970s Corner co-founded Gamelan Son of Lion, an ensemble that used iron instruments constructed by Barbara Benary, primarily to play their own compositions. Corner himself made a point of not studying traditional Javanese music, believing that it “wasn’t safe” for himself “as a creator” to do so. It was only once he had “assimilated the gamelan” on his “own terms,” by writing compositions that came out of his sense of himself and of his “culture”—which he identifies as a “finely spun-out network” of like-minded avant-garde artists that extends “over the whole world”—that he decided he could “go to Java.” Meeting and hearing the work of Indonesian composers at the first International Gamelan Festival in Vancouver in 1986 was a “great revelation”; he learned of “people in Indonesia who I can . . . identify with and feel as part of my culture” (Corner 1986: 24-31). While at the festival, he spoke with Franki Raden, and began to plan his first visit to Indonesia. Once in Jogja, where he was invited to give a workshop at AMI, Corner met Asmara, whom he found to be someone he could relate to especially readily; he has stayed with Asmara on subsequent visits. Asmara similarly felt a compatibility with Corner, noting “I was inspired by his thinking, found much that I agreed with.”

As much as particular ideas and opinions, what Asmara shares with Corner is a skeptical attitude and critical perspective. Both question and depart from certain commonplace ways of thinking about things, such as the relationship of their compositional practices to tradition and their sense of cultural identity. Corner’s identification with a “finely spun-out” international

network of avant-garde artists takes the place of a more common identification with geoculturally defined and historically continuous tradition. “I’ve never been able to feel I’m in a particular tradition . . . I never felt that I belonged to Western culture.” Going further, he suggests that it is “not at all certain” that the “avant-garde in 20th century America . . . is part of the Western tradition.” He argues:

America is a transplanted provincial place on the terrain of another culture which was wiped bare but still leaves traces and auras. With the admixture of African culture and everything else, America as a whole sits uneasy with the Western tradition. It is already not part of the Western tradition as we know it in Europe. So we could say that none of us are Western in a wholly unadulterated sense. (ibid.)

In continuing to state that “as a modern, as an American and even to a certain extent as a Jew” he feels “that there is not a music that is mine,” Corner does not completely discount the relevance of ethnic and other group identities. But he challenges the usual idea that America is part of the West, expressed in formulations such as Euro-American music, which conjoins two distinct geographical entities within a shared cultural frame. “My music”—that is, the music he composes—“is the only music that feels like my music,” Corner asserts. “I compose in order to create my culture.” Accordingly, as noted above, he avoided learning about traditional Javanese music before he composed his own pieces for gamelan—before he “assimilated” it on his “own terms” (ibid.)

Asmara does not articulate his perspective quite so neatly, but underlying his sometimes contradictory statements there is a similar drive to actively define both his own identity and that of his music. His vantage point, as an Indonesian composer drawn toward musical resources from the Western art music tradition, is also different, and not simply a mirror image of Corner’s—though there are certain symmetries.

Asmara has not divulged much about his family background. The above-quoted profile of
him as director of the YCMF noted that he “sheepishly revealed he’d come from a Yogya ‘blue-blood’ family.” He alluded in our conversations, however, to his family having “financial issues” that precluded his taking music courses. I surprised him by guessing from his European name that they were Christian, though Asmara himself is a committed atheist—an extremely marginal disposition toward religion in Indonesia that is indicative of his self-determination. Asmara was born in Jakarta, and “moved around” to various places, including Medan, before his family settled back in Jogja when he was in junior high school. He described his parents as “amateur musicians”; as is common for priyayi, their interests included both Javanese and Western music. His father “often played recordings of karawitan and Western classical music.” Asmara further commented “one could say it was compulsory” to listen. His mother sang in a church choir, as did Asmara for a time. He went along to rehearsals where his father played trumpet, but also, like his father, studied traditional Javanese dance, albeit only briefly. His father also took him to watch wayang kulit performances, where he would sit behind the dhalang, and to gamelan performances.

Asmara’s only practical experience with gamelan, however, was from introductory courses at AMI. He did not, then, acquire anything close to the grounding in traditional Javanese music of the typical student at ASKI Solo. But neither was he “pure urban.” One evening when we went to a street-side lesehan (an informal eatery where one sits on mats on the ground), he started singing along with a rambangan playing on the radio. When I asked

65. Medan, Indonesia’s fourth largest city, is the capital of North Sumatra.
66. According to Asmara, students enjoyed studying gamelan a lot, though the most advanced instruments they would learn were bonang and gambang. After AMI merged with ASTI and other institutions to become ISI, gamelan was no longer required for those majoring in Western music.
67. Jogajanese name for palaran, a form in which macapat (sung Javanese poetry) is accompanied by gamelan.
about it, he told me he had learned *macapat* from his mother when he was young—well enough that he still remembered it decades later.\footnote{68}{Although he knew the *macapat*, he did not immediately recognize the treatment as *campursari*.}

Asmara’s choice to pursue training in Western art music did not come at the expense of his appreciation for *karawitan*. He has even embraced, in a modest way, the role of spokesperson for traditional Javanese music—a role Tony Prabowo has assiduously avoided—by participating in a mostly English language e-mail discussion list, <gamelan@listserv.dartmouth.edu>. In addition to posting announcements about events in Jogja and other news, most but not all involving gamelan, he has also contributed to conversations. His Javanese pride was on display when he chimed in on a thread with the subject “there is no mozart in gamelan music” [sic.] that started with a message from a young gamelan student contemplating how much experience was required to attain mastery of *karawitan*. The absence of famed child prodigies such as Mozart was taken not as a deficiency, but rather as evidence of *karawitan’s* sophistication. Asmara added that it was “illogic to compare Mozart as composer and Gamelan” as there have been anonymous composers in Java from “around 8 century” whose pieces are still performed. When asked what the evidence for this was, he replied “hah...the evidence ...again this is a view of Mozart side, who always needs evidence.” Announcing the name of the composer “as Bach or Mozart is funny for us,” he stated, as gamelan pieces do not have one composer but many, and pieces are “given as an offering to the King or the Goddess.” “And do not forget,” he concluded, “mystery is necessary for us as Javanese.”  

\footnote{69}{As a postscript, he admitted “actually I hate Mozart..he..he.”. The discussion, which took place 11–12 February 2011, is archived at http://listserv.dartmouth.edu/scripts/wa.exe?A0=GAMELAN. Asmara also mentioned Mozart, and his prolificacy, in my initial interview with him, in explaining}
In another comment on the list Asmara gestured toward a more universalist stance. In a debate over how best to introduce Javanese gamelan music to those unfamiliar with it—a debate that began with the suggestion that *gendhing soran*, pieces involving only the loud instruments, were “more easy to digest” than pieces involving singers, and that included a fair bit of essentializing about the preferences of Western listeners—Jody Diamond, one of the administrators of the list (and whose interview with Philip Corner is the source of the passages quoted above), offered “I like to think there is no ‘Western’ listener, only human listeners.” Asmara, in a post with the subject “1000%...”, added another zero in the body of the message, stating “I am 10000% agree with you, music have not ethnicity, religion or whatever.”

Yet when it comes to reflecting on his own work as a composer, his comments reveal not a concern with asserting music’s autonomy from ethnicity and other socio-cultural frames, but rather a desire to redefine the ethnicity of the tradition he has chosen primarily to work in. In 2005, once I had gotten to know Asmara and his views fairly well, I asked him what he thought of the term “Western-oriented.” He said he “did not agree” with it as a term for what he and his colleagues were doing. It implied they wanted to “Westernize” (*membaratkan, mem-‘Western’-kan*) what was around them, as if it was something pure into which they introduced Western elements. In his case he wanted to do the opposite. His intention—he characterized it as his “obsession”—from early on was instead to Javanize Western music.

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70. The thread, which began with a post from Bambang Setijoso with the subject “Gendhing Soran, why not?”, ran from 29 April to 1 May 2010.
Javanizing Western Music

Asmara’s efforts to Javanize Western music are not primarily on the level of idiomatic adjustments, though idiom has been relevant. He related how his first composition—“Ilusi Untuk Hidup,” which he wrote for a festival co-organized by a number of arts institutions—
took as a point of reference Philip Glass’s opera Einstein on the Beach, and how he “saw that as like a gamelan piece.” It demonstrated how repetition “can be applied to Western instruments,” and that despite the questions from those selection committee for the festival, who had “Western discipline,” “actually repetition is OK in Western music.” That being the case, he felt he could “transcribe gamelan music to Western instruments.”

Asmara asked, referring back to my question, “So am I Western-oriented, in that case?” I, in turn, asked him why he didn’t simply compose a piece for gamelan instruments. He explained that there were “already people from gamelan” who were doing so, and perhaps more importantly, that because he was a student of Western music he was afraid a work for gamelan instruments wouldn’t be accepted by the committee. He said he was open to composing for either Western instruments or gamelan, but insufficiently confident (agak malu-malu). He then noted that students “hadn’t yet turned their attention to traditional instruments,” and “hadn’t observed that there was anything of interest in tradition.” “Our thinking was still Western,” he admitted. When I asked if it was fitting to call that an orientation, he conceded that it was.

71. As Alec Roth explains, the success of festivals in Jakarta such as the PKM, which brought together representatives from academies in various regional centers, “led immediately to the arts academies themselves getting together to organise an annual festival to be hosted by each institute in rotation” (Roth 1987: 56). Asmara indicated that his work was selected for the festival held in Solo, in “1981, or 1982.” Roth gives 1980 as the year of the inaugural festival, held at ASTI Yogyakarta, and 1983 as the year that Festival IKI was held at ASKI Solo.
Yet Asmara distinguished himself from students such as Haryo “Yose” Suyoto who were more decidedly Western-oriented. “My concept is different,” he asserted. What he took from the West was only certain “ways of thinking” about composition, about “exploration,” or an awareness of form. Pointing to the many books on Western music he had on a shelf in his living room, I asked “so you’re genuinely interested?”, to which he responded “Definitely” (pasti). He wants “to know how Westerners explore instruments.” But did he want to follow their model? “Join their style, no,” he answered—but then acknowledged that he followed some of it “just because I like it.” “Serialism” was a “system he thought was suitable” for him (cocok untuk diri saya). He also acknowledged that he had “a bit of a desire to change the style of tradition.” By way of explanation, he observed that gamelan musicians “had to sound things first,” that for them it was “feeling that emerged first” (rasanya dulu yang maju). In many cases, they simply take existing forms and arrange them. “My approach is different, it’s logic that comes first, then feeling.” He is more concerned with concepts. Still, he insisted that even though he uses serial techniques, “my way of thinking is like a traditional person.”

I did not press Asmara on what thinking like a traditional person meant to him. What he offered immediately after making this claim was that in matters of ornamentation, “cengkok-cengkok,”72 or tempo, he made an effort to introduce traditional thinking. Earlier in our conversation he stated that he “infuses” his pieces for Western instruments “with much Javanese philosophy,” both “consciously and not.” This presumably accounts for his use of numbers in the titles of his string quartets, which he explained has nothing to do with the

72. Cengkok is, to my knowledge, a term specific to Javanese karawitan. As Marc Perlman explains, the term has “varied meanings,” but most commonly refers to the melodic patterns of “soft elaborating parts.” Explaining further, the term “is a way of referring to the conventionalized aspect of melody . . . the stable melodic content of a stock phrase . . . which can be varied and embellished in indefinitely many ways but which remains recognizable” (Perlman 2004: 57).
sequence in which he composed them—he titled his second, from 1996, “String Quartet No. 7”—but rather with their numerological significance.

In reference to the compositions themselves, the infusion of traditional thought is more often somewhere between philosophical abstractions and musical specifics. He reportedly composed “A Little Piece for Pianoforte” in 2001 “in connection with the old ceremonial gamelan sekaten,” whose music Dieter Mack, presumably following Asmara, describes as being characterized by its “serene quietness, elegance and balance”—an “aura which Michael Asmara tried to create with a contemporary musical language for piano.”73 The piece sounds, however, much more like Arnold Schoenberg’s “Sechs Kleine Klavierstucke, Op. 19,” if a little more subdued and spacious, than it does a gendhing played as loudly as possible on an oversized gamelan sekaten in the midst of the carnivalesque atmosphere of Mulud (Pemberton 1987: 25-26).74 An earlier piano piece, “The River,” from 1986, similarly sounds much more like Philip Glass than a transcription of gamelan. Asmara’s “inspiration” for his “Three Pieces for Solo Violin,” from 2008, came from the rebab, the “two-stringed spike fiddle” that is “the only bowed instrument used in gamelan music.” As he explains,

I began composing this piece by taking a few phrases from a rebab melody I once heard in its traditional gamelan setting, and freely developing and expanding those phrases as I saw fit to create these three pieces.

73. Notes to the audio CD Asia Piano Avantgarde, by pianist Steffan Schleirmacher (2005).
74. Gamelan sekaten, larger and lower-pitched than standard Javanese gamelan, are also played extremely loudly. In a photograph in an article by John Pemberton, a gamelan musician poses, with his mallet above his head and a grin on his face, at the demung in a gamelan sekaten whose middle key he cracked in two. The musician “reportedly received a prize from the palace” for “this amazing feat.” Although gamelan sekaten is played loudly, and at times involves playing at a fast tempo, there is a certain austerity to the music, in contrast to both the rame (boisterous, lively) quality of a kle mengan (and the carnival that is also part of the sekaten festival, and the dramatic changeability of mood at a wayang. It is perhaps this “aura” that Asmara is trying to recreate.
“What I ultimately want to do with this work,” he concluded, “is to bring the violin as close as possible to the spirit of the rebab.” This did not, however, entail anything approaching literal imitation. Like most of his string writing, the piece makes ample use of the techniques characteristic of high modernism listed above (exaggerated dynamics, frequent shifts between bow position, and between bowing and pizzacato). The one technique perhaps taken from rebab is a scratchy tone produced by bowing with excessive pressure, although in his piece the noise is sustained rather than used to articulate beginnings and endings of notes. I am unable, even as a rebab player, to sense what the original phrases are. Bringing the violin closer to the spirit of the rebab did not, apparently, preclude transforming the rebab’s phrases beyond recognition.75

**Ethnological Valence, Revisited**

Asmara’s contention that music must not have ethnicity, his claim that he thinks like a traditional person, and his obsession with Javanizing Western music, together shed a different light on the concept of ethnological valence that I have proposed as a way to theorize the notion of things having ethnicity. A key premise that my theorizing builds on is that ethnicity is not an inherent property, but rather is something perceived and/or attributed—or, in the case of people rather than things, felt and asserted. Diamond’s comment, that she likes to think “there is no ‘Western’ listener, only human listeners,” has to do with perception, though in her case, in seeking to counter essentializations of the listening habits associated with a given ethnicity (or meta-ethnicity), she effectively discounts any influence of cultural

75. My comments on “A Little Piece for Pianoforte” are based on the recording by Steffan Schleiermacher (2005); “The River” on a recording I obtained from Michael Asmara (n.d.); and “Three Pieces for Solo Violin” on a performance and recording by Emilie-Anne Gendron (2011).
background on listening. Asmara proclaims his agreement with Diamond, but shifts seamlessly from the ethnicity (or lack thereof) of the perceiver to the ethnicity (or lack thereof) of the thing that is perceived—in this case, pieces of music.

Similarly, in acknowledging that he is obsessed with Javanizing Western music, Asmara’s focus is on things, and not so much the thing perceived, but the thing created. He explained how in his compositional practice he seeks to infuse both the exterior and the interior of his pieces with Javaneseness—the exterior through his approach to musical attributes such as ornamentation or phrasing, the interior, through thinking like a traditional person, with Javanese philosophy. He had less to say about how his work would be perceived, or by extension how he would be regarded as a composer. But toward the end of our conversation on the topic, after discussing his use of compositional techniques that are derived from Western art music, and how his approach differs from that of traditionally-based composers, he did comment “I don’t know if I would be called Western-oriented or not.”

I suspect most Indonesians would consider Asmara to be Western-oriented, though how strongly they would think this would depend on which aspects of his compositional output they are familiar with. No less importantly, it would depend on what informs their frame of reference—the extent of their familiarity with the Western art music tradition, and more specifically the international avant-garde, on the one hand, and karawitan on the other. The ethnological valence of his pieces would be sensed in part according to their instrumentation, but also according to their idiom. Asmara’s works for piano, orchestral strings, or orchestra, would almost certainly be read as Western, or Western-oriented, though their use of a style

76. Asmara’s distinction between exterior and interior may well relate to the Javanese concept of lair-batin, body and soul, and perhaps even kebatinan, which refers both to the inner self and the Javanese mystical tradition.
heavily indebted to mid-twentieth century modernism might not evoke the Western art music tradition as strongly as lagu seriosa was felt to have a “church flavor” by mid-twentieth century critics (chapters 1 and 2). This is not because high modernism is any less specific an idiom, but simply because it is not as well known in Indonesia.

Those pieces that included gamelan and other Javanese instruments would not be read as so straightforwardly Western. But neither does the use of Javanese instruments alone preclude the possibility of Asmara being considered Western-oriented as a composer. As used in his earlier pieces, traditional instruments, like the kentongan in “The Resistance of Substance,” would have been read as iconically Javanese. But their iconicity was contained by their also having a representative function. As he put it in describing “Banjir” (flood), a “total theater” piece from 1984 that was his first to use kentongan,77 traditional instruments were used “in connection with the story.” “Banjir” also used lesung, a hollowed out log used as a mortar for pounding rice to remove husks that has also, because of the musical character of its use, been adapted to performing arts contexts.78 In Asmara’s piece, it was used to convey a sense of life returning to normal after a flood, whereas the music proper was scored for an ensemble of flute, oboe, bassoon, guitar, and string orchestra.

77. With choreography by Synthia M.T. Sumukti and text by Gentong Haryo Seno Ali.
78. A key example is kethoprak, a form reportedly invented by R. M. Wreksodiningrat, an official at the court of Paku Buwana IX, in 1914. Noting “peasant women singing as they were stamping rice in traditional fashion in a hollow log (lesung),” Wreksodiningrat added other instruments and choreographed dances based on the rhythms of the interlocking stamping. The practice was quickly taken up by “groups both amateur and professional” and developed into a popular theatrical form (Brandon 1967: 47-48). One of the more popular songs of Nartosabdho, who early in his career performed with kethoprak troupes, is “Lesung Jumengglung.” The song describes and depicts the lesung in both its text and its music. A short documentary on YouTube profiles Sanggar Seni Sekarjagad, a cultural organization founded in Sukoharjo, a town south of Surakarta, to preserve the “lively intangible heritage” of lesung (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IdRRmmChN68, accessed 27 February 2013).
Asmara’s 1991 “Prelude” featured more specifically musical, but no less iconic, elements from Javanese court traditions. It starts with *kemanak*, a pair of banana-shaped bronze bells, playing the simple alternating pattern that they do in the *gendhing kemanak* with which they are primarily associated. The pattern even includes the *salahan*, the rhythmic variation of two off-beat strokes on the higher-pitched *kemanak* that anticipates the approaching gong—though Asmara, describing himself as “a little . . . not anti-, but ‘don’t return to tonic’,” deliberately chose not to use gong, precisely because it is like “the return to tonic,” something that “Javanese need.” “Prelude” also features a “singer/pesinden” singing an excerpt from a traditional Javanese poem, “Wahyu Mahkota Rama,” in the *macapat* meter *dhandhanggula turulare*, and in the *pelog nem* scale. These elements are, however, set in a piece which otherwise has nothing to do with traditional Javanese performance practice, nor for that matter with the conventional practices of Western art music. Instead, both Western pitched percussion and piano, and gamelan instruments in *pelog* and *slendro* tunings, follow a similar process of building up repeated sequences of notes as the piano part in “Gending Dolanan,” though in this case indicated through textual explanations. The instruments play independently of each other; with regular intervals at different tempos that remain constant through to the end, and with the instructions for each player to choose his or her own pitches, and to play each note in the sequence with a different dynamic, the overall effect is that of a cloud of clock-like machines.

79. *Gendhing kemanak*, one category of pieces used to accompany the *bedhaya* and *srimpi* dances that were specific to the Central Javanese courts (Holt 1967: 115-118), consist of elongated melodic lines sung by a female chorus, accompanied by a relatively sparse ensemble of *kemanak*, *kendhang*, *kenong*, *kethuk*, and *gong*. 
Composing for Gamelan

Starting in 2002, Asmara began a much more intensive engagement, composing a number of concert pieces for ensembles consisting exclusively of gamelan instruments. As significantly, the gamelan parts were neither drawn from traditional practice, nor generated by the performers based on written instructions, but largely, or entirely, through-composed. The first two—the “trio” for Javanese gender, “Night Music for Marzenka,” that caught Jack Body’s attention at the 2002 Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival, and “A Piece for 15 Rebab,” also from 2002—are relatively modest pieces for multiples of the same instrument that explore more systematically the juxtaposition of different scales.

Far more ambitious, almost orchestral in scope, is “Niji,” a composition scored for a more or less full Javanese gamelan and voices. Its opening and closing sections employ some instruction-based elements that, as in earlier pieces, add some degree of theatricality. Over the course of an extended opening, the majority of the performers enter the stage from the audience, speaking phrases from a poem by Shin Nakagawa—who commissioned the piece—and ringing bells a specified number of times. This activity is layered over two simple musical elements that start the piece: a pulsed drone from repeated strokes on a single bonang pot, and a rebab alternating between a held tone and six-note phrase that is varied rhythmically by elongating a single note, one note later with each repetition. This linear process is not unlike that used in previous pieces, but here the rebab part is fully written out, as are changes in the dynamics of the bonang drone.

After ten iterations of the rebab phrase, a slendro gender enters with a short repeated pattern, providing a link to the next section, for three gender, that is drawn from his “Night Music for Marzenka.” For most of the section, the three parts, for the one slendro and two
peelog gender found in a typical full gamelan, play continuously at a more or less even pulse—though the peelog barang gender plays in triplets against the even eighths and sixteenths of the other two, as they are notated using a hybrid system of ciphers for pitches and stems and beams for rhythm. Toward the end, they play short gestures in rhythmic unison, most of them placed on off-beats so as to obscure any sense of meter.

The gender are then joined by the slenthem in a transition to what, involving as it does the full ensemble, may be considered the core of the piece. Unison accents played by all of the bronze instruments mark the opening of this section, and periodically punctuate a texture that is at first diffuse, with each part playing single notes or short motives, but that through meticulously detailed scoring builds in density and energy, as some parts shift in and out of playing longer phrases, while other players stop playing their instruments to hum or speak text. After a shift with almost everyone humming the texture becomes more focused, even briefly suggesting a more conventional texture of a mostly stepwise balungan, first in slendro and then switching seamlessly to peelog, played by demung and saron, with peking doubling each note and slenthem playing one subdivision behind, as they traditionally would. The balungan leads into an extended gantungan, “hanging” on a single pitch, and the texture shifts back to being more rhythmically diffuse, building in density, and then playing one last stroke in unison on a different pitch. The piece ends with the players speaking fragments of the text—the score indicates simply that they should “make an improvisation”—as they leave the stage.

With a few of the parts in “Niji,” Asmara makes use of the expertise of his performers in traditional performance practice. For the pesindhen, who enters shortly after the introduction of humming in the section for full gamelan, he requires it. In contrast to the rhythmically
precise notation of the pointillistic instrumental parts, her fully idiomatic part is notated only approximately, with only periods to indicate tones that should be held longer. The exact execution of the line is left to her, as it would be traditionally—though in most traditional contexts, nothing at all, not even the text, would be explicitly specified. The pesindhen also adds appropriately idiomatic gregel (ornamentation), as does the rebab player. The gregel is especially key to the effectiveness of the rebab part in the opening, which is also notated only approximately with respect to rhythm—though that part uses the pelog scale quite unidiomatically, as a seven-tone scale rather than as a system of five-tone modes.

The brief passage in the section for full gamelan suggestive of traditional repertoire, while benefitting from the performers’ experience in playing such repertoire, does not require knowledge of traditional performance practice. With traditional repertoire, players derive their parts from a notated (or memorized) balungan by applying the appropriate garap (treatment) implied by the musical context. In “Niji” all the parts are written out in full. What is required instead is thus an ability to read staff notation—or more specifically, its system of indicating rhythm. Going beyond this specific technical skill, as importantly “Niji” requires the ability of both the director and the ensemble to work together to realize a score where the parts mostly do not follow the conventions of an established idiom, either in themselves or in relationship to each other. Players cannot rely on anticipation of the expected, or confirmation of it from listening to other parts, but must follow the conductor. It demands, in short, a skill set specific to the Eurological mode of new music.

Asmara’s compositional engagement with gamelan instruments has thus involved much less of an accommodation of the approach to music making of traditional or traditionally-based performers—an approach which can be termed Indological—than, for example, Tony
Prabowo’s work with the New Jakarta Ensemble. He has, instead, transferred the same working methods used in his concert pieces for Western instruments, methods in which fully notated scores play a central role. He has, from this perspective, compromised less. This is not so much out of ideological rigidity, but more because the players he has worked with have allowed him to do so.

Asmara’s “A Piece for 15 Rebab,” though composed in 2002, was not performed until I premiered it at the Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival in 2005. He was able to get his “Night Music for Marzenka” performed thanks to the availability of Marzanna Poplawska, then in Indonesia conducting her dissertation research, and Sumianto, a graduate of STSI (ASKI) Solo who was exceptionally committed to musik kontemporer. The third player, Bambang Siswanto, was one of the most promising gamelan musicians to pass through STSI in the late 1990s, but was far more focused on traditional repertoire. He managed to learn and play Asmara’s piece, but he noted that he wasn’t really able to grasp it (tidak bisa ditangkap) and that it was “odd.” It came as a shock to him, as he was used to “memorizing a melody” and then “expressing” it. Instead, he felt “disturbed,” and his “brain had to work.” Siswanto commented that Asmara “never played” himself, but nevertheless he “could tell when there were mistakes,” and so Siswanto “believed in him as a composer” (Bambang Siswanto, p.c., 24 July 2004).

Asmara composed the much more ambitious “Niji” knowing that “it was not Indonesians that would play,” but instead the Japanese group Gamelan Marga Sari, directed by Nakagawa, that commissioned the piece. This is not to say Asmara did not have to take into account their capabilities. From visiting the group he knew that some had “no musical

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80. I performed one of the parts live along with a multitrack recording of myself playing the others.
experience other than gamelan.” He knew that “not all of them are musicians,” that some were “visual artists,” and that some counted “in the gamelan method” while others counted “in the method of Western music.” Nakagawa had asked for “an improvisational piece” so that the group could “enjoy the process,” and was worried the piece Asmara wrote would be beyond their capabilities. In the end, the group was able to tackle the piece. The group did get “stuck” during the dress rehearsal, but managed to play the piece without any problems for the performance.

(Re-)orienting the Eurological

When I spoke with Asmara about “Niji” in 2004, I asked whether the piece could be played in Indonesia. His immediate response was that he could not imagine it being possible, but then he said “maybe, but the process would be long.” “Niji” has yet to be performed in Indonesia. However, “A Piece for Bonang,” a composition in a similar vein but for a smaller ensemble of five players, has. The piece was presented at the Southeast Asia Competition and Festival in Bandung in 2011, the competition whose jury Asmara was invited to serve on by Dieter Mack.

Scored for all the pencon instruments in a Javanese gamelan (bonang barung and bonang panerus in slendro and pelog, and kenong), “A Piece for Bonang” uses serial techniques, taking “4,5,1,7 pelog” and “6, 5,2, slendro” [sic] as “the basic row” and then using it “to create permutations.” Even more than “Niji,” the resulting composition has nothing to do with traditional idioms, with only a fleeting reference in one instrument’s part to the

81. From notes posted by Asmara at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFiVb7n4x4c, accessed 22 May 2013.
alternating figures of mipil technique. Having organized and participated in a performance of the piece myself, it became clear that it required no familiarity with the performance practice of karawitan, but instead needed to be approached as a piece of contemporary percussion music that happened to be scored for Javanese instruments.

“A Piece for Bonang” was performed in Bandung in 2011 by Ensemble Kyai Fatahillah, which is perhaps the first group of musicians who are equally at home performing both traditional gamelan music—in their case, Sundanese gamelan salendro—and complex notated scores in the Eurological mode of musik kontemperor. Most of the ensemble’s members were graduates of the performing arts high school in Bandung (SMKI, Sekolah Menengah Karawitan Indonesia), a school whose focus was traditional music, but where “Western music” was added around 2001. The group’s founder, Iwan Gunawan, noted that this was a “cause for concern,” but did not elaborate (p.c., 11 June 2005). The group formed at the Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI, formerly IKIP, Institut Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan), where the members gained considerable skill as composers and performers of musik kontemperor under the tutelage of Dieter Mack, who had been teaching as a guest lecturer at UPI/IKIP since 1992.

82. In this technique, pairs of tones from a slower-moving balungan are repeated, in anticipation of their appearance in the balungan.
83. I organized the performance after learning of the piece from a recording of a rehearsal that Asmara had posted online. The group that played the piece was the “new music unit” of the Cornell Gamelan Ensemble. In contrast to the students and community members of the regular ensemble, who like the members of Gamelan Marga Sari often have little or no musical experience other than with gamelan, the “new music unit,” formed for this performance, consisted of three graduate composition students, myself, and Cornell’s director of percussion, Tim Feeney. That we were able to perform the piece satisfactorily owed much to the guidance Feeney was able to offer, drawing upon his extensive experience with contemporary art music as a percussionist with a Doctor of Musical Arts from Yale University.
Mack’s influence is especially apparent in the work of Gunawan, which I first heard when I went to a rehearsal at UPI in 2005. Kyai Fatahillah was preparing a program to take to a major festival of Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia in Berlin, the music programs of which were curated by Mack. It was this opportunity that prompted the group to give itself a name. The program also included a new piece written for the ensemble by Slamet Abdul Sjukur, from whom I had found out about the rehearsal, and with whom I had travelled from Jakarta. Some of the items the group played demonstrated their facility with traditional Sundanese music. Most striking was their ease in playing the scores by Sjukur, and especially that by Gunawan—scores which like Asmara’s “Niji” were through-composed and fully notated. It was this capability that distinguished them from other gamelan ensembles. For the more traditional items, Gunawan played kendang, while for Sjukur’s piece and his own he conducted, the players reading from parts on music stands. For Gunawan’s piece “Fonem” the players also spoke what I described in my fieldnotes as a “made up text” that sounded “vaguely German”; the program notes clarified that “the underlying concept” for the piece was the “‘desemanticisation’” of “syllables of words in foreign languages.” The music was sharp and angular, with unpredictable accents that were closely coordinated with sequenced computer processed sounds. One player, seated in a chair, played a set of kendang set vertically in a circle, with mallets. Another played what Gunawan described as “prepared bonang . . . like Cage,” with the pots rearranged so that traditional patterns would sound completely different.85

Ensemble Kyai Fatahillah strengthens the facet of musik kontemporer represented by

Asmara’s compositions for gamelan instruments, providing a more dependable outlet for the performance of such works within Indonesia. Through their engagement with fully notated scores and modernist idioms, they meet composers like Asmara halfway, or perhaps even further. They support a rather different kind of nativist turn, one that does not require composers working in a Eurological mode to altogether change their working methods.

This kind of nativist turn also differs from those I have examined so far in that it is less dramatic. In Asmara’s case, this is not only because of the direction he has ended up taking, but also because of where he started. His application of the serialist techniques he employed in his pieces for Western instruments to his score for *bonang* represents a significant degree of continuity in his compositional approach. But there is also significant continuity in his outlook, as he was already in one important sense nativist.

In Asmara’s narrative of how he came to compose the music he does, there is no episode of a revelatory encounter, such as Sjukur falling in love with the music of Ravel, or of any other decisive moment that led him to become captivated by Western Art Music. He does not define himself as a composer in relationship to idols such as Boulez or Takemitsu, even though he shares with Prabowo a predilection for the musical idiom of high modernism. He is not “pure urban,” but grew up amidst a mix of Javanese and Western cultural expressions. Thus, when he began pursuing music seriously in two closely related environments that were very much Western-oriented—that of AMI, and that of the circle of students who were marginalized because of their interest in *musik kontemporer*, but who nevertheless remained in AMI/ISI’s orbit—Asmara was, he recounted, “thought to be a karawitan person.”

Far from becoming a karawitan person, however, Asmara became a composer steadfastly committed to the Eurological mode. He has actively and explicitly promoted this mode
through the Yogyakarta Contemporary Music Festival, which starting with the fifth festival in 2009 declared its goal thus: “to create a space for atonal, twelve-tone and total serialism, electro-acoustic and aleatoric compositional methods.” The statement added at the end “along with the influences of ethnic musical styles,” a relegation of traditional music to a minor, supporting role that parallels its place in Asmara’s own compositions: as fleeting references within or self-contained elements juxtaposed against music that is otherwise decidedly modernist, whether it is for Western or Javanese instruments. Yet although Asmara’s approach as a composer is solidly Eurological, he claims to think “like a traditional person.” He rejects the label “Western-oriented,” and speaks of his obsession to “Javanize” Western music.

Asmara’s approach to Javanizing Western music is, however, highly idiosyncratic, and with no obvious effect on how his music sounds. This is in contrast to the way his application of serialist techniques make his gamelan compositions sound utterly unlike traditional karawitan—or, for that matter, the Indological musik kontemporer of traditionally-based composers. He states that he thinks “like a traditional person,” but he does not act like a traditional Javanese musician. The most important effect of Asmara’s efforts to Javanize Western music is not on the way his music sounds, but rather on the authority, or sense of authority, he thereby gains. He has engaged with a Eurological mode of creating music, and has thus developed that part of his musical self that is Westernized. But he has done so without becoming fully Western-oriented, without feeling like he is simply following an external aesthetic authority. Maintaining a sense of connection to his own Javanese heritage helps him do this, and in turn bolsters his authority when he then turns toward composing for traditional Javanese instruments. Asmara’s practice as a composer is thus hybrid, and no less
so in his pieces for Western instruments than in his pieces for gamelan or mixed instrumentation. But as a hybridity that is not necessarily apparent, what matters is less that it “intervenes in the exercise of authority” (Bhabha 1994: 114)—that is, by authorities that would have power over him—but more that it fosters his own authority and thus enables him to act.

This is not to suggest that external authorities no longer mattered, or that Asmara could simply ignore them. He responded to them in diverse, sometimes contradictory ways. Asmara called Javanizing Western music his obsession, but he also declared that music must not have ethnicity. In between these two seemingly incompatible positions is another part of the mission statement for the Yogyakarta Contemporary Music Festival, which identified its “intention . . . to inform the Yogyakarta musicians and audience as fully as possible about current ideas, theories, and concepts in the musical world especially in Asia.” Here there is both a generalizing of aesthetic authority, posing “ideas, theories, and concepts” as “current,” rather than coming from a specific geo-cultural area, and at the same time a prioritizing of attention to how the modernist aesthetics have been taken up “in Asia.” The common denominator underlying all of these statements is a quiet challenging of the idea that musical modernism is necessarily Western.

Having more successfully established a sense of his own authority as a composer than most of his peers—including, perhaps, Tony Prabowo—Asmara has brought to his more concrete efforts to reinvigorate the Western-oriented musik kontemporer scene in Jogja a much needed confidence. He has done so, in part, by making it less Western-oriented, even as it remains largely Eurological. Together with the contributions of others such as Iwan Gunawan and Ensemble Kyai Fatahillah, the Eurological mode of musik kontemporer may
yet find the authority that it has heretofore lacked. It may yet gain a more prominent place in the broader field of musical activity that the term *musik kontemporer* has come to designate. It is highly unlikely, however, that it will dominate, as there are other equally notable trends. It is to these that I now turn.
7 Out of Obscurity: Blurred Boundaries with the Rise of Eclecticism

Up to this point, the focus of my account of musik kontemporer’s pre-history, its history proper, and the predicaments with which those involved with it must contend, has been directed toward understanding its most exemplary facets: the modernist and experimentalist work carried out by both Western-oriented and traditionally-based composers. There is, however, more to musik kontemporer than sound exploration, the use of electronics, happenings, and the language of high modernism, applied to either Western or Indonesian instruments, as the brief account of the eclectic offerings at the first Yogyakarta Contemporary Music Festival that opens this study, and the short section on the rise of such eclecticism in the previous chapter, have quite vividly demonstrated.

This chapter seeks to make sense of the increasingly eclectic profile of musik kontemporer. From the outset, because it encompassed the work of both Western-oriented and traditionally-based composers, musik kontemporer has been fundamentally diverse. There was nevertheless a shared emphasis on conspicuous innovation, encouraged by the senior figures who oversaw the emergence of musik kontemporer’s initial scenes, and the central forum, the Pekan Komponis Muda, that brought those scenes together. The price of this emphasis on innovation was a certain degree of obscurity. As the influence of those senior figures waned, musik kontemporer began to drift toward a more unruly eclecticism, which
can be understood as a shift away from elitist conceptions of aesthetic validity toward those that were more populist, away from a primary responsiveness to authority toward a search for broader relevance. The balance of specific concerns and strategies varied considerably, between the active pursuit of an audience broader than the rather specialized one that *musik kontemporer* had developed; an engagement with musical idioms that would seem to support such a move, or that were more consonant with the full range of one’s individual affinities; a renewed commitment to traditional musics that, at least in living memory, if less so presently, were widely appreciated; or a prioritizing of more participatory and interactive modes of music making. Common to all of these approaches was some idea of connecting, actually or at least potentially, with a broader socio-aesthetic base.

With this shift came a blurring—or in some cases a redrawing, or effacing—of boundaries, and the increasingly consuming debate over what was and what was not *musik kontemporer*. The biggest and most unsettling challenge came from the increasing amount of work that eroded what Andreas Huyssen characterized as “the great divide” between high art and popular culture (Huyssen 1986). It is this work, and the composers who produced it, that the bulk of this chapter profiles, through case studies of what I call alternative populisms. Before turning to those, I first examine a challenge to *musik kontemporer*’s sense of identity rooted in aspects that were present from the start: the presence of what in general terms might be called traditionalism. Finally, I examine the truly alternative populism represented by composers who have chosen to collaborate with individuals and communities at further remove from the elite urban milieu in which *musik kontemporer* initially developed.
A Fundamental Diversity: The Enduring Importance of the Traditional

Trajectories of Traditionalism

After the eighth iteration of the Pekan Komponis Muda in 1988—which by that point was called simply the Pekan Komponis—the Jakarta Arts Council withdrew its funding for the event. The festival was not held again until ten years later, in 1998, and after that only sporadically, with a meeting in Bandung in 2000, and most recently in Solo in 2005. It ceased to be a regular annual event, and thus no longer functioned as the central forum for *musik kontemporer* it had been through the 1980s.

*Musik kontemporer* thus lost the aesthetic anchor that the PKM had provided, in large part through Suka Hardjana’s exercise of both curatorial agency, in inviting and not infrequently advising participants, and critical authority, in offering feedback in discussions and in printed reviews. Other losses in particular scenes further contributed to a decline in the importance of centralized aesthetic authority. With his death in 1983, Gendhon Humardani was no longer present to push his vision of a contemporary existence for the traditional performing arts on students and faculty at ASKI Solo. Though in his teaching Slamet Abdul Sjukur had encouraged his students to question authority in general, his exit from IKJ, which prompted theirs, more decisively undermined whatever aesthetic authority IKJ had represented.

Unmoored, *musik kontemporer* began to drift toward the kind of unruly eclecticism touched on briefly earlier in this study, and that will be explored more extensively in this chapter. What made that eclecticism especially unruly was work that engaged with aspects of popular culture, which from Humardani’s perspective, and Hardjana’s also, at least initially,
was the opposite of the kind of musical creativity they encouraged. But also contributing to that eclecticism was a diversity more fundamental to *musik kontemporer*.

From its outset, the PKM accommodated a considerable range of work. Besides the inherent heterogeneity of experimentalism, there was the fundamental plurality that derived from the inclusion from the outset of both traditionally-based and Western-oriented participants. While the sides of *musik kontemporer* they represented remained distinct in this forum, the strong showing of traditionally-based composers reflected and reinforced the underlying balance of aesthetic authority that led Western-oriented composers—and, as we saw, Hardjana himself—to work with traditional instruments and musicians, in ways examined in the previous two chapters.

Cutting across the distinction between the Western-oriented and traditionally-based was that between experimentalism and what might be characterized as traditionalism. While the kinds of conspicuous experimentalism represented on the Western-oriented side by Sutanto’s happening and Otto Sidharta’s and Franki Raden’s electroacoustics, and on the traditionally-based side by ASKI’s sound exploration, were mostly held up as exemplary—an exception was A. Wahyudi Sutrisno’s piece for the seventh PKM, which Suka Hardjana panned as a “catastrophic image . . . beyond the ability of my sound mind” (Hardjana 1987, in 2004b:213)—there was also work that was more aesthetically conservative.

The significance of such work, in terms of the challenge it posed to *musik kontemporer*’s experimentalist identity, varied considerably, however. Traditionalism on the Western-oriented side, because of its lack of “a fundamental,” as Hardjana put it (chapter 5), meant something different than it did on the traditionally-based side, and had a different trajectory. As the number of Western-oriented composers at the PKM dwindled, the works they
presented tended to hew more closely to the Western art music canon, at least in format: Royke Koapaha’s “Sonatina” for piano and flute at the fourth PKM in 1983 (Hardjana 1986: 239-249); Marusya Nainggolan’s pieces for a flute trio, a cello quartet, and a sextet of winds, strings, and piano, and Yazeed Djamin’s pieces for piano and piano and violin at the sixth in 1985 (Hardjana 1986: 387-397); and Trisutji Kamal’s work for two pianos and singers at the eighth in 1988 (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1988: 6-9). These more “classical” pieces at the PKM did not, however, presage a more widespread turn toward the Western art music canon on the part of Western-oriented composers. Djamin, as director of the Nusantara Chamber Orchestra, might have been a force for this direction, but ceased to be a significant presence of any kind after moving to Malaysia in 1994 (chapter 6). Kamal, who had once appeared as a standard bearer for classicism, as for example in her comments at the Pertemuan Musik in 1974 (chapter 5), had, like so many Western-oriented composers, gone nativist, founding an ensemble that included Balinese percussion in 1994 (chapter 6). Nainggolan had similarly turned away from her earlier focus on classical instruments and players, even if she retained the terminology. A concert of her works in 2005 featured an ensemble with the English-language name Marusya Chamber Music that combined four guitars, marimba, electric bass, drum kit (played by the rock drummer Innisisri), and traditional percussion (one of the players, I G Kompiang Raka, was also a member of Kamal’s ensemble), with Nainggolan herself on piano.¹ The “Dialogue in Music” they presented steered clear of the modernism of her earlier work, which in at least one case employed serialism,² instead trading in folk-rock

1. The concert, which I attended, was held on 25 June 2005 at the Gedung Kesenian Jakarta, where Nainggolan served as director.
2. The composition for flute trio, “Malam,” that Nainggolan presented at the 1985 PKM was based on a theme using the “system of 12 notes” (Hardjana 1986: 389).
and other popular idioms, with Nainggolan and Raka adding paraclasical and what had come to be called etnik accents.

A composer like Joko Lemas, who presented a wind quintet in a neo-classical style at the first Yogyakarta Contemporary Music Festival (Introduction), is thus more an idiosyncratic exception, among a host of idiosyncratic exceptions, than he is representative of a new mainstream. Perhaps because the aesthetic conservatism exemplified by his work represented neither a new orthodoxy, nor, more importantly, a return to an older one, it has been tolerated even by those who have followed and/or pushed an avant-gardist agenda. Fishing for his opinion of such work, I brought up Joko Lemas’s wind quintet in speaking with Slamet Abdul Sjukur, knowing that he had, in the 1970s, complained about the Indonesian music world being one or two hundred years behind (chapter 3). Sjukur did not know of Lemas, so he asked me what his work was like. I described the piece as sounding like something out of the Paris conservatoire circa 1910, and admitted that I found it rather anachronistic. But was this a problem, if the work was good? Sjukur responded “if it’s good, no problem” (Slamet Abdul Sjukur, p.c., 20 August 2005). Joseph Praba, who prided himself as being an “orang gila” (crazy person), characterized Trisutji Kamal as “mischievous” (nakal), who composed pieces that were “not pleasant for the ear to listen to”—though he liked them. Praba did, however, readily acknowledge, when I expressed my surprise, that she was not as far out as Sjukur (Joseph Praba, p.c., 14 August 2005). Discussing Kamal with Michael Asmara, Asmara recognized that Kamal was “not revolutionary,” but also argued that one should not compare the “extent of progression with Europe, America”; one needed to view it “relative to the general culture” (Michael Asmara, p.c., 06 September 2004).

In some of the newer traditionally-based scenes, aesthetic conservatism was more of an
issue. Jennifer Fraser notes that many Minangkabau composers involved with *musik kontemporer*, such as the brothers Hajizar and Elizar, were “driven by a concern for indigenous aesthetics,” and saw *musik kontemporer* as an alternative to the somewhat Westernized and pop-oriented form of *talempong kreasi*.

Elizar’s piece “Bakucimang,” presented at the eighth Pekan Komponis in 1988, worked entirely with traditional material. Other Minangkabau composers, however, “wished to reserve the term exclusively for avant-garde practices that were not culturally reformist in nature.” Anusirwan, who became a member of Tony Prabowo’s New Jakarta Ensemble, was dismissive of the “reimagination of indigenous sources in new forms,” criticizing them as “mere arrangements and thereby less creative” (Fraser 2007: 252-253).

There has also been some tension between avant-gardism and more aesthetically conservative or traditionalist positions in the better established traditionally-based scenes in Solo and Denpasar. But as two conspicuously iconoclastic cases demonstrate, both of them involving gongs, the most venerated of gamelan instruments, the way in which this tension plays out, and what it meant for *musik kontemporer*, is more complex than it might first appear. Sang Nyoman Arsawijaya’s 2006 graduating recital piece “Geräusch,” which involved playing a gong with an electric grinder (McGraw 2009: 131-133), prompted I Nyoman Windha, as ISI Denpasar’s leading composition faculty member, to channel

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3. *Talempong kreasi* is a genre of new “creations” using large ensembles *talempong*, brass gong-chimes similar in form to Javanese *bonang*, tuned diatonically to facilitate the performance of traditional and pop melodies in arrangements using Western-style functional harmony. See Fraser (2007:chapter 4) for an extensive discussion.

4. The focus of the piece was the interlocking patterns of *talempong pacik*, small hand-held brass gong chime, which Elizar “tried to develop,” in part by drawing on “techniques and patterns of other Minangkabau musics” (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 1988: 10). As Jennifer Fraser notes in her brief discussion of the piece, the the “musical references” to specific regional styles “are explicit ”(Fraser 2007: 253-254).
successive classes into creating “more healthy works of art in the interest of the Balinese people” (I Nyoman Windha, quoted in McGraw 2009:124). Arsawijaya’s piece was intended as a “provocative statement of protest against the ISI faculty.” But rather than an outright rejection of traditionalism, he and others more specifically objected to the emphasis on formalism in ISI Denpasar’s pedagogy, viewing it as a betrayal of what they believed was the true spirit of traditional Balinese music. Arsawijaya’s and others’ transgressions, McGraw observes, were “often rooted in a respect for a real or imagined golden age” in which composers were less beholden to rules, and in which art employed the ugly toward critical ends (McGraw 2009:132-134).

Starting with a performance more than a decade earlier, at Taman Budaya Surakarta in 1995, I Wayan Sadra made use of gongs by dragging them on the floor. In his case, the gesture was intended as a critique of the mythology surrounding gongs, prompted by a visit to a foundry which made pointedly evident to Sadra that gongs “emerged not from the mystery of ritual, mantra and religion, but from pure, grinding, exploitative labor” (McGraw 2013b: 341-342). Rahayu Supanggah, when I interviewed him in 2004, alluded to Sadra’s (mis-)use of gongs after I asked him to elaborate on his comment that he didn’t want to damage tradition. He noted that he could not bring himself to use instruments in the way that some of his colleagues do. He stopped short of condemning Sadra, or others who play instruments in ways that might damage them, whether for the sake of social critique or simply in search of new sounds, stating simply “That’s their responsibility, not mine—I have a different attitude” (Rahayu Supanggah, p.c., 21 July 2004). Sadra’s iconoclasm did not disqualify him from taking his turn as head of the karawitan department at STSI (ASKI) Solo in the mid 2000s, a role that seemed to inspire a heightened concern with the decline of general interest in
gamelan in Java. The problem, Sadra suggested, had in part to do with “stagnation” and the lack of new compositions that used “complete gamelan,” as opposed to non-standard sets of instruments—such as just gongs—“as the basis of innovation” (I Wayan Sadra, p.c., 04 August 2005).

The tension between an avant-gardist imperative and the concerns of traditionalism in Denpasar and Solo—where the two most significant contingents of traditionally-based composers are based—had most of all to do with finding a balance between, on the one hand, creative freedom and ideas of aesthetic and social progress, and on the other, propriety and the maintenance of traditions. The question of whether work of a more traditionalist character should or should not be regarded as musik kontemporer was less of an issue. In both scenes, musik kontemporer was well enough established that its place at one end of a spectrum of approaches to the creation and performance of music that related in different ways to long-standing traditions did not threaten its identity. A full survey of these approaches, most of which would not be categorized as musik kontemporer, is beyond the scope of this study. Here I provide only a partial sampling of work by composers at ASKI Solo to draw attention to the enduring importance of an ongoing involvement in tradition on musik kontemporer’s profile. As will be seen, composers at ASKI Solo did not focus exclusively on musik kontemporer, but also produced work that fell at different points toward the traditional end of the spectrum.

In Service of Tradition

In general, Sutton’s comments about A. L. Suwardi from 1993, that “unlike many of the Western composers we would identify as avant-garde” he “does not appear to have a political
or social axe to grind, nor is he bent on consistently offering up challenging or unusual music for gamelan” (Sutton 1993: 60), continue to hold true for nearly all of the composers associated with ASKI Solo. In support of his observation, Sutton pointed to two pieces by Suwardi, a ketawang “in a mostly traditional bedhayan style,” and a “light dolanan (à la Nartosabdho) written in the early 1980s,” the latter created “for the opening of a government-funded dam in Wonogiri” (Sutton 1993: 61). Suwardi has continued to compose in a variety of styles. The two pieces he presented at the Art Summit Indonesia in 2001 featured the fruit of more than twenty-years exploring sound, using mostly instruments of his own invention, and though they contain rather more material of a quasi-traditional character than some of his earlier pieces, they still feature long sections that focus on sonic textures rather than melody or rhythm. But for a commission for a recording project featuring “Contemporary Composers” produced by John Noise Manis, Suwardi composed a piece for siteran ensemble that was innovative in squarely traditional ways—combining a vocal melody in the style of the kroncong-derived langgam form with instruments in the siter family playing as they would for jineman, “a genuine Javanese genre,” but tuned to a barang miring scale. His aim

5. The project, which involved Suwardi and five other faculty members at ASKI (STSI) Solo, resulted in the audio CD Gamelan of Java, Volume II: Contemporary Composers (Lyrichord LYRCD 7457), one of a significant number of projects and CDs produced by Giovanni Sciarrino under his pseudonym John Noise Manis. According to Manis, for this project “the musicians were entirely free to conceive and realize their compositions.” In many other projects involving traditional repertoire, however, Manis has intervened, sometimes significantly; see my review of two of his CDs (Miller 2011) for an overview and critique.

6. Siteran ensembles are named after the plucked zithers (siter) which form the core of its instrumentation. They also typically include one or more singers and a drummer. In his notes for the piece, titled “Sindhen Kewek,” Suwardi states that the ensemble “experienced its ‘golden age’ in the 1920s and 1930s.” By the 1990s, it was associated mostly with street musicians. Langgam, as discussed in chapters 1 and 2, was a form of kroncong that drew upon Euro-American popular song, and that was later adopted to gamelan by Nartosabdho and others. Jineman are light and small-scale pieces featuring a melody sung by a pesindhen. Barang miring is not traditionally a scale that instruments are tuned to, but rather a scale superimposed on the slendro tuning system by singers and
was to “offer new possibilities of treatment . . . in the hope that it will help revitalize the development of siteran.”

With some ASKI Solo composers, the contrast between their kontemporer and traditional work can be even more stark. In 2005 Sukamso presented “Glenak Glenuk,” a work that featured kempul, a set of small hanging gongs conventionally used to punctuate phrases and mark subdivisions in cyclical structures. Sukamso removed them from the rack from which they are usually hung to be played by a single player, and gave one to each of eight players seated in a semi-circle, along with individual pencon from a bonang panembung. At the opening the instruments are played with conventional mallets, but with fast bouncing strokes that mute the sound, which is further muffled by the placement of the instruments directly on padding on the floor. The short gestures passed among the players, with no sense of meter, give rise to a murmuring texture that changes in density and dynamic, but is otherwise consistent. The piece turns theatrical when the players, all male, first whisper and then talk with one another, until a ninth female performer walks past. Sukamso jumps up and leads her back to the middle of the semi-circle and convinces her to join them. After another minute or so of discussion, as if in rehearsal, they recite kendhangan syllables in an exaggeratedly slow unison. Later in the piece, the male players play just the kempul, with the mallet on the knob and by slapping their hands on the face, in unison in a through composed rhythmic pattern

rebab, most often for short melodic passages.

8. My discussion is based on a copy of a video recording obtained from Kaori Okada.
9. Kendhangan, the parts played on kendhang, can be spoken using standardized syllables. As dance movement correspond closely to kendhangan patterns, Javanese dance teachers routinely use such syllables in teaching.
with no obvious sense of repetition. In contrast to this conspicuously *kontemporer* work, Sukamso also, in that same year, composed a piece more in keeping with his role at ASKI/STSI/ISI, and in the broader *karawitan* community in Solo, as a gender specialist. At the Klenengan Pujangga Laras, a monthly event sponsored by non-Indonesian aficionados of *karawitan* that has become one of the major venues for the playing of “classical” repertoire, Sukamso presented a newly composed *gendhing* in a fully traditional idiom. The *gendhing* took its title, “Leng-Leng,” from the opening words of the text to *pathetan slendro nem wantah*, the melody on which the piece was based, using the same kind of compositional process as other well known pieces in the traditional repertoire.

Other composers at ASKI/STSI/ISI downplay the distinction between *kontemporer* and traditional. Supanggah went so far, when I interviewed him in 2004, to assert quite adamantly that for him “there is no difference between tradition and *kontemporer*.” To a certain extent this outlook is reflected in his work. Compared to most of his colleagues, those pieces that would be categorized as *kontemporer*, subsequent to “Gambuh,” the piece he presented at the first PKM in 1979, have tended to be more suffused with traditional material. Meanwhile, his *gendhing* tend to be more melodically complex than most, whether recently composed or

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10. Sukamso was, for example, the gender player on most of the final series of recordings released by national recording company Lokananta (ACD 301 through ACD 325).

11. For this particular *klenengan*, the participants had decided to play all *gendhing* written by regular participants, recognizing the increasing number of such pieces by musicians in the scene in Solo. As Kitsie Emerson, who along with her husband Wakdi Dwidjomartono is primarily responsible for organizing the *klenengan*, noted, “it was an entire evening of new pieces, but all in a traditional Solo style such that you would never know the pieces didn’t come out of Bp. Mloyo’s notation book!” (http://www.gamelanbvg.com/pl/reports/year_04/4_10_20050521.html, accessed 31 December 2013). The reference is to the authoritative compendium of traditional Solonese repertoire compiled by Mloyowidodo (Mloyowidodo 1976).

12. This process of turning unmetered vocal melodies into gamelan compositions is the subject of the fourth chapter of Sumarsam’s 1995 book *Gamelan: Cultural Interaction and Musical Development in Central Java*. 
older. Yet the differences in approach between these and other facets of his work remain unmistakable. This is neatly demonstrated by two pieces Supanggah presented at a Pujangga Laras klenengan in 2009 that doubled as an inauguration of a gamelan that he had just acquired. The first, a gendhing that like Sukamso’s was based on pathetan slendro nem wantah—though more cryptically and in a bedhayan style, with a prominent vocal melody sung by a large mixed chorus—was played by the regular participants at the klenengan. They were able to sight-read the piece—which for the instrumentalists meant interpreting the balungan as they would any piece in a traditional idiom—though the singers stumbled at times over less predictable turns of phrase, and the ensemble as a whole might not have made it through some somewhat unconventional transitions had Supanggah himself not played kendhang. The second piece was an almost completely reworked version of “Gambuh.” It was stripped of the most conspicuously experimentalist elements in the 1979 PKM version—the textural episodes, the humming tops, and exaggerated alok (chapter 4). Instead, all the material related to traditional idioms, though not all of them were Central Javanese. The first of two sections involving full gamelan treated the pelog scale more in the manner of a piece for a Balinese gong semar pegulingan in saih pitu, and included a male performer singing in

13. See Brinner (1995) on the issue of musical competence, and how notation is used. See Perlman (2004), especially chapter 4, for a focused examination of “The Balungan as Melodic Guide.”
14. The piece—titled gendhing “Sasangka,” the first word in the second phrase of pathetan slendro nem wantah—began not with a buka, a melodic introduction played by rebab or some other instrument, but directly from pathetan Kedhu, another slendro nem pathetan. Supanggah was able to signal the entrance of the rest of ensemble with kendhang strokes that lead into the first stroke of gong. My comments are based on a recording obtained from http://www.gamelanbvg.com/pl/, accessed 13 January 2014.
15. Gong semar pegulingan is an older form of Balinese gamelan associated with Balinese courts. Many gong semar pegulingan are tuned to saih pitu, a heptatonic scale similar to Javanese pelog, but used distinctively as a true heptatonic mode, rather than as tuning system allowing modulation between pentatonic modes.
the style of Balinese *tembang*. A later section superimposed melodies of a Balinese *suling gambuh*, a Javanese *pesindhen*, and Qur’anic recitation. It was not the regular *klewenengan* participants who performed the piece—indeed, they would not be able to—but rather Supanggah’s own ensemble, Paguyuban Gamelan Garasi Benawa, the members of which are all instructors at ASKI. Many of them were involved in the recording of yet another version of “Gambuh,” released on a self-produced CD with the bilingual title “Kurmat Pada Tradisi (Homage to Tradition)” in 2001.

Of all the composers associated with ASKI/STSI/ISI Solo, the most insistently committed to that scene’s hallmark approach of sound exploration, and its implied departure from tradition, is Pande Made Sukerta—though that insistence has come to manifest itself more in his teaching than his compositional output, which tapered off in the mid-1990s. In our conversations in 2004 and 2005 there were several times that he declared “it’s called new composition [*komposisi baru*], there has to be something new.” Otherwise “it’s just composition.” It is not that Sukerta insists on discovering an entirely new palette of sounds for every composition. On the contrary, he has liberally reused “discoveries” from his earliest explorations of sound, such as flexed sheets of plywood and the clopping of drinking glasses. And though he spoke of stepping outside tradition, of leaving tradition behind completely, with only one or two exceptions his pieces also include traditional material—though invariably that material is handled in ways that clearly reframe it. It may be radically circumscribed in scope, as with his use of a Minangkabau *saluang* playing an idiomatic trill

16. Sukerta’s commitment to sound exploration is evident in his self-produced handbook on composition, which he first put together in 1989. The most recent version is from 2001. Jody Diamond is apparently working on an English translation, with the intention of publishing it in *Balungan* (Jody Diamond, p.c., 1 November 2013).
but sticking to a single note in one section of his 1989 composition “Mana 689.” Later in that same piece, the saluang plays the kind of unmetered flourishes it would in a traditional context, but superimposed with another performer speaking in Javanese and low pitched glissandi produced by rubbing the head of a large frame drum.¹⁷ In an essay co-written with Suwardi about the pieces they presented at the fifth PKM in 1984, they addressed the occasional use in their pieces of “figuration, techniques and idioms that resemble traditional models,” acknowledging that however much they may long for “emancipation” from their background, it is one thing that “consistently pounds” on their “spirit.” They asked whether this was “a sign” of their “inability” to “act and change totally” (Hardjana 1986: 316). Yet far from viewing an involvement in tradition only as an impediment, Sukerta believed it provided an indispensable foundation. He believed that for “people making composition, tradition must be strong.” He felt that people who “don’t know traditional karawitan” should “not bother” to compose, as the results would be “really bad” and “only sort of new” (Pande Made Sukerta, p.c., 07 September 2004).

Supanggah, when I interviewed him, declared “I am a traditional person.” The same can be said of all the composers in the scene at ASKI/STSI/ISI, Sukerta included—even if, in suggesting “traditional” and “non-traditional” as terms to categorize the inclinations of different regional scenes, he identifies with the latter category.¹⁸ They are all profoundly grounded in their backgrounds and ongoing involvement in their respective regional musical traditions. Those, like Sukerta, who expressed a desire to break free from their backgrounds,

¹⁷. My comments are based on the recording of the piece on a CD produced by Jody Diamond (1993).
¹⁸. In Sukerta’s opinion, musik kontemporer composers in Bali still worked within the framework of tradition.
have departed from tradition only to then bring tradition along with them. He has engaged in what he regards as non-traditional composition, but that work nevertheless reflects his foundation in traditional music. But while all composers in the scene at ASKI/STSI/ISI are in an important sense traditional, that sense is different from the sense in which, for example, the majority of the participants at an event like Klenengan Pujangga Laras are traditional. The way in which their kontemporer compositions exist—as idiosyncratic pieces created for specific occasions and committed to memory by the specific group of players involved in their creation and realization, which if they are performed for another occasion must be recreated, and as often as not are extensively reworked—differs markedly from the way in which traditional gamelan repertoire exists—as pieces held at least at one time in shared memory, and even if recalled, or seen for the first time in case of new gendhing, conforming to melodic conventions that allow any group of musicians steeped in the interpretive practices of karawitan to realize.

In declaring that for him, there is no difference between tradition and kontemporer, it is surely not that Supanggah fails to recognize these very real differences. Rather, his declaration is a refusal to submit to an intellectual framework that defines tradition as less than fully contemporary, and that thus reinscribes the longstanding polemic that pits tradition against modernity. Though very much committed to the project of strengthening traditional music’s contemporary existence, a project that, as he put it in the notes to his self-published CD (2001), included the creation of “strange new works of karawitan,” Supanggah had little investment in the term musik kontemporer—or, for that matter, in identifying himself as a

19. For a more extensive discussion of Sukerta’s relationship to tradition, see my profile of him and his work in a recently published volume on Performing Arts in Postmodern Bali (Miller 2013).
“composer,” a term that “arrived from, in quotation marks, ‘Western music’” (Rahayu Supanggah, p.c., 21 July 2004). Instead, he asserts the primacy of tradition as the framework for all of his work, compositional and otherwise.

There are some figures in on the Western-oriented side of musik kontemporer who thought modern and traditional music were better left as distinct realms. The singer Nyak Ina Raseuki, though she professed to “really love tradition,” and indeed has involved herself in projects to bolster its continued existence,²⁰ felt that the compositions of composers from ASKI Solo were “lacking in structure,” and thus denigrated traditional music. Their work, and that of other traditionally-based composers, was not based on the discipline of composition (ilmu komposisi), as was the work of Tony Prabowo, the composer with whom she had worked most extensively, and whose work she regarded most highly. In her opinion, “if we are going to adopt modernism, we have to adopt it fully” (Nyak Ina Raseuki, p.c., 18 August 2005). In other words, modern music, in her view, should follow established Western models.

Raseuki perhaps gives voice to a perspective that some others on the Western-oriented side of musik kontemporer share but do not articulate. They represent a measure of dissent to the outlook expressed by Suka Hardjana, that “tradition is modern” (chapter 5). But while her critique suggests that traditionally-based composers are less effectively modern, it does not dismiss them outright as irredeemably traditional. It does not seriously challenge their standing as significant figures in the field that had come to be known as musik kontemporer.

²⁰. Raseuki completed her PhD in ethnomusicology at the University of Wisconsin, and at the time I interviewed her was involved with the Lembaga Pendidikan Seni Nusantara (The Foundation for Education in Arts of the Indonesian Archipelago), an organization founded by Endo Suanda focused on developing curricular materials on traditional Indonesian musics for Indonesian schools.
It could not do so, as by that point they were too well established. Indeed, Raseuki asked me not to relay her criticism of specific composers, not wanting to offend them.

The issue of *musik kontemporer*’s relationship to traditional musics is not completely resolved. But overall, tradition is too important to too many composers—those with a foundation in traditional musics, like those at ASKI Solo, obviously, but also to Western-oriented composers, as we saw in chapters 5 and 6 and will see further in this chapter—and thus to the field as a whole to be neatly cordoned off. The polemic between tradition and modernity that overshadowed the discussions of the arts that led to the founding of the PKM was not completely extinguished. But among the circles of those involved with *musik kontemporer*, its intensity was greatly reduced, from open flames to smoldering and occasionally flickering embers. That the traditionally-based, if not tradition itself, can be modern, is beyond serious question. The way in which traditionally-based composers most significantly challenge *musik kontemporer*’s territorial integrity—to draw a parallel to a longstanding concern about the status of the Indonesian polity, a concern that has intensified with the decentralization of political authority and rise of regionalism following Suharto’s downfall—is not through presenting traditionalist work as *kontemporer*, but rather through realigning their primary commitment as musicians away from *musik kontemporer* and back toward tradition.

**Alternative Populisms and a More Unruly Eclecticism**

“*This is What You Call Kind of Pop!*”: I Wayan Sadra’s Musik Dialektis

Not so long after I Wayan Sadra began dragging gongs, he also began moving in a more
subtly subversive direction. To close a faculty presentation at STSI (ASKI) Solo in 2000, Sadra organized what amounted to a jam session. A young student, Gondrong Gunarto—the first part of his name referred to his long hair—started with a short jembe solo. Less than thirty seconds in, after establishing a short fast-paced groove, he was joined by others on other drums and shakers, and Sadra proclaiming “Agak pop! Ini namanya agak pop!” (Kind of pop! This is what you call kind of pop!). The groove continued while Sadra introduced the band. Eventually people in the audience, including myself, were invited to join in. Playing gamelan instruments, violin, flute, or vocalizing, the style of the group improvisation shifted from the vaguely Afro-Cuban opening to a more atmospheric and free-form cloud of noodling, until the percussionists reestablished a rhythmic focus with another groove.  

The “band” at the core of this improvisation consisted of a group of students with whom Sadra had begun working on an ongoing basis. At some point they took on the name Sono Seni Ensemble, after the name of the studio where they rehearsed, on the grounds of a home Sardono had renovated in the old Kemlayan neighborhood of Solo. Many of the members were involved in an earlier project, a piece from 1997 entitled Bunyi Bagi Suara yang Kalah. A notable feature of the performance was the thinly veiled political commentary of the ending, which involved the participation of a cow that was meant to represent the Indonesian Democratic Party. With its use of visual and theatrical elements, the piece was

21. In addition to attending and participating in this performance, which Sadra called “Memanggil untuk Improvisasi” (call to improvise), I consulted a field recording I made.

22. The members of Sono Seni listed by Andrew McGraw are “Gondrong [Gunarto]”—the jembe player from the jam session described above—“Zoel [Mistortoify], Danis [Sugiyanto], Agus Bing, [Joko S.] Gombloh, and Peni [Candra Rini]” (McGraw 2013b: 346).

23. For several minutes, the cow—billed as “Prof. Dr. Cowsapy (worldwide musician)” (sapi is Indonesian for cow)—paced around to the sparse accompaniment of isolated gestures played on gamelan, other assorted percussion, amplified violin, electric guitar, and electric bass, until Sadra ends the performance by calling out “Stop playing, the cow can’t budge.” Following this, an MC announced
consistent with the “holistic productions that combined the visual and sonic arts” (McGraw 2013:338) that Sadra had been producing since his time at IKJ in the late 1970s—the most frequently cited example is “Lad-Lud-An,” the piece involving a rotten egg dropped on a stone that Sadra presented at the second PKM in 1981. But apart from the absurdist ending, the piece was mostly about the fusing of instruments and genres. As Marc Perlman notes, the instrumentation included Javanese and Balinese gamelan instruments “alongside a violin, electric guitar, electric bass, two Roland D-50 synthesizers, and digital delay,” as well as “an African jembe drum, miscellaneous percussion and sound effects, and a fog machine.” The stage was given “a rustic look, with foliage sprouting everywhere.” The music was “a spirited mix,” including “a traditional Javanese ditty . . . as well as the rock stylings one would expect from the electric guitars.” Much of it was based on short riffs played on the gamelan instruments and electric bass, as vamps over which the other instrumentalists “take solos like jazz players” (Perlman 1999:13-14).

Most of the work produced collaboratively by the Sono Seni Ensemble was in a similar vein. 24 Andrew McGraw, who joined the ensemble in 2003, admits to being “rather surprised that the performance was over “because the cow is so easily reined in.” As Marc Perlman notes, the cow represented the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), whose leader, the “popular opposition figure” Megawati Sukarnoputri, was “forced from the leadership of the PDI in a government-backed power play.” Sadra “got the idea of working in the reference to the PDI” after realizing that the performance date he had booked, 27 June 1997, was the anniversary of “Black Saturday,” when “government toughs invaded PDI headquarters and beat and evicted her supporters, provoking a riot and subsequent government crackdown” (Perlman 1999:13-14). In McGraw’s account of the piece—which he did not himself observe, but heard about as a member of the Sono Seni ensemble—the “work’s climax” involved pulling “a water buffalo—the mascot of the PDI—upon the stage,” and subjecting it to “the resonant low sounds of the many gongs Sadra’s musicians continuously beat” until it defecated (McGraw 2013:342). In the video documentation from TBS that I observed, consistent with Perlman’s account, it was a cow, not a water buffalo, that was brought on stage, and it did not defecate. It may be that Sadra remounted the piece; McGraw states that the piece was staged in 1998, which is the year that Suharto resigned.

24. My assessment is based on rehearsals I observed in 2004, a copy of video documentation (Sono Seni Ensemble and John Jacobs 1999), and an audio CD (Sono Seni Ensemble and Takahito Hayashi
and, honestly, a bit disappointed,” having known about Sadra’s more radically experimentalist work, “to find that the Sono Seni Ensemble was engaged in what I first heard as a kind of ‘ethnic pop music’” (McGraw 2013b: 348). Through his involvement with the group, McGraw discovered that in its working methods and underlying philosophy, there was more to it. Summarizing Sadra’s own account of his shift toward a populist aesthetics, McGraw notes how “Sadra articulated his evolving concept of the relationship between art, the composer and society through the term musik dialektis, most clearly outlined in his 2002 article for Gong.”

During the late New Order, Sadra states, musik kontemporer was incorrectly imagined as a kind of barometer of the health of the national arts. But this art was restricted to a tiny elite of college educated composers and upper class listeners and was segregated from the ‘folk’ (masyarakat). Distanciation from the masses was, to a certain extent, engineered upon the assumption that, being uneducated, the masyarakat would reject the form. By the reformasi, the perceived failure of musik kontemporer as a ‘well-rooted’ and strong ‘national art form’ was then paradoxically blamed on the lack of a strong audience (ibid. 349, summarizing Sadra 2002).

Sadra continues to describe the emergence during the reformasi, the period following the fall of Suharto, of “various multicultural ensembles outside of the conservatory whose practice resided between the ‘mainstream industry’ and ‘serious’ composition.”25 These ensembles “embodied the musik dialektis approach by engaging a temporal, spatial and ethnic openness” (ibid.), appropriating “several musical grammars,” from sources such as “pop, keroncong, dangdut, gamelan, jazz, and even serious electronic musics” (Sadra 2002:35). Musik dialektis “suggests an assemblage of topics and references rather than a cohesive genre” (McGraw 2000).

25. Sadra names Irwansyah Harahap’s ensemble, Talago Buni, Planet Bambu, Modero, and Sawung Jabo, in addition to his own Sono Seni ensemble (Sadra 2002:35).
2013:350). It would “not be entertainment or traditional music [klanengan] nor an
antagonistic avant-garde” (Sadra 2002:35), instead dissolving “the antithesis between the
pop-serious divide as theorized by the Frankfurt school” (McGraw 2013:350).

In the case of the Sono Seni Ensemble, the “musical grammars” they appropriated
reflected the backgrounds and interests of the individual members. McGraw notes that as
students of Sadra’s from STSI (ASKI) Solo, they were all “conservatory educated” and
further notes that they were “fluent in East Javanese folk forms, jazz, rock, refined Solonese
court gamelan, keroncong, Sumatran flutes, Balinese gamelan and Chinese folk musics”
(ibid.:346). They were not uniformly fluent in these musics, but rather each brought different
capabilities and affinities. Significantly, the group included those who did not fit the profile
of a typical ASKI/STSI student. Joko S. Gombloh, as an ethnomusicology student, wrote a
thesis on rock music in Solo, while Agus Bing completed the equivalent of a MFA after
majoring in violin at ISI Jogja (Joko S. Gombloh, Agus Bing, p.c., 27 July 2004). Gondrong
Gunarto, who started off the jam session described above, reportedly dropped out before
graduating. They were not, in other words, necessarily highly skilled in traditional Indonesian
musics—though some certainly were. Their level of fluency with jazz and rock also varied
considerably. The premise of musik dialektis, and how the Sono Seni Ensemble put it into
practice, was not, however, predicated on everyone having mastery of one specific genre.
Instead, as McGraw notes, much of their time in rehearsal involved “transferring musical
patterns between different idioms such that they no longer felt ‘natural’ or to be a part of
musical common sense,” an approach that Sadra termed transmedium (ibid.:346-347).

The music that resulted from the Sono Seni Ensemble’s collective approach would not
ever be mistaken for pop—that is, the specific popular music genre designated by the term in
Indonesia—though some of their work does resemble the fusion style of jazz that was the most common variety of the form in Indonesia. Nevertheless, the trend within musik kontemporer that their music represented, glossed as “band” or “combo,” was regarded as “dangerous” by Nyak Ina Raseuki (p.c., 18 August 2005)—who though she herself performed with jazz-fusion bands, preferred, as we saw above, her musik kontemporer to be more disciplined. Slamet Abdul Sjukur, commenting on the Sono Seni Ensemble, reportedly accused Sadra of spoiling his musicians (Michael Asmara, p.c., 08 July 2005). Sadra was aware that his “less controversial and more ‘listenable’ compositions” to have “eroded his credentials among some in the Indonesian and Western avant-garde,” some of the latter finding his music “cheesy,” and some of the former feeling that he had “sold-out” (McGraw 2013:353). But in Sadra’s view, represented by his production manager in a press release, the use of “modern and popular instruments such as guitar, bass, keyboard and drum” did not imply that their work would “totally submit to mainstream pop music.” Sadra did indeed share creative responsibility with the other members of the Sono Seni Ensemble, but he did not simply give them carte blanche. Their engagement with the popular was, at least philosophically if not stylistically, carefully considered, as Sadra’s critical comments on other populist developments in musik kontemporer, noted below, demonstrates. But it was precisely because the populist turn took so many forms that it was seen, by some, as a threat to musik kontemporer’s integrity.

Eschewing Obscurity

Sadra’s turn to *musik dialektis* and his work with the Sono Seni Ensemble can be understood as a reaction to the complacent insularity of *musik kontemporer*. At ASKI/STSI/ISI Solo in particular, which provided an especially secure and supportive institutional base, faculty members involved in *musik kontemporer* were comfortable. They were perhaps even a little too comfortable, as far as the health of *musik kontemporer* was concerned. The “hothouse atmosphere” fostered by Humardani (Roth 1987: 429) did not completely isolate them from a changing climate in which *karawitan*’s once broadly supported existence in Javanese society was being eroded by the growing prevalence of commercialized popular music. It did, however, effectively insulate them from its effects. As well-supported civil servants, the artistic and economic viability of their activities did not depend on attracting the interest of the public at large. Some occasionally created work that picked up on trends that did originate as a response to shifts in popular taste, such as Suwardi’s Nartosabdho-style *dolanan*. But many were able to focus on work that was guided by Humardani’s ideas about the form that the traditional performing arts should take to have contemporary relevance, including more rarefied experiments like those created for the PKM. As noted in chapter 4, Humardani advised against the public presentation of such work outside of “special and limited forums.” The task of a broader “penyebaran” (dissemination) was indefinitely deferred (Rustopo 1990: 321-323).

The enthusiasm for experimentation among the generation that studied under Humardani was not matched by those who followed. Alec Roth, based on his observations in 1984, commented that “the period of intensive and single-minded experimentation at ASKI . . . now seems to be over.” Composition had, in being made part of the curriculum, been
“institutionalised,” but not necessarily to its benefit (Roth 1987: 217-218). Students have continued to compose, but except in a few cases they have done so primarily to fulfill curricular requirements. Sukamso noted that the majority of the students who choose composition for their thesis project “aren’t really interested,” but are “forced into it” because they lack sufficient “skill” as players (Sukamso, p.c., 4 August 2004). That is, they choose composition instead of presenting a recital or writing a thesis, the other two options. Danis Sugiyanto, a member of the Sono Seni Ensemble, similarly noted that many students choose composition as a “shortcut,” and further estimated that as many as sixty percent relied on others to compose their required pieces for them. Very few, even among those who composed their own piece, continued to create work after they graduated (Danis Sugiyanto, p.c., 23 July 2004).

Beyond examination pieces, most of the compositional activity at ASKI/STSI/ISI Solo has been carried out by faculty. A small number of leading figures, such as Rahayu Supanggah, A. L. Suwardi, and Sadra, have been particularly successful; all three have, as noted in chapter 5, presented concerts at the prestigious Art Summit Indonesia, and have also performed and engaged in collaborations abroad.28 Others receive some credit as faculty for creating new works for events on campus, as an adjunct to their primary work as teachers, and, in cases like that of Sukamso, their activity outside ASKI/STSI/ISI as performers. Much of this work, as some of the examples described in the previous section demonstrate, was in a

28. To point to just a one example each: In 2005, Suwardi composed music for and performed in the interdisciplinary production Spice Root with South African director Rehane Abrahams, which I learned about from a flyer he brought back. Sadra contributed to Search: Hamlet, a 2002 production directed by Singaporean director Ong Keng Sen mounted in a castle in Denmark (http://globalshakespeares.mit.edu/search-hamlet-ong-keng-sen-2002-two/, accessed 30 May 2014). Of the many collaborations Supanggah has engaged in, the most prominent is Robert Wilson’s I La Galigo, noted in chapter 6.
similar vein as that which was presented in 1980s at the Pekan Komponis Muda, though perhaps with less of a sense of urgency.

**Alternative Populisms in the Face of Industri**

For his own presentation at the Art Summit Indonesia in 2004, Sadra presented a work featuring the conspicuously rebellious gestures with which he had established his reputation as a standard bearer for experimentalism. The piece, “Daily,” began with a group of performers dragging gongs on the floor. It ended with a variation on the breaking of an egg in “Lad-Lud-An.” Instead of dropping a single rotten egg on a stone, he sat on a stool with his back to the audience and tossed multiple eggs at a large griddle cum canvas, a nine-by-twelve foot iron sheet to which gas burners and two contact microphones were attached. The sound of the eggs smashing against the surface resounded through the hall, enhanced by digital delay.29 Visually, the end result was like a large abstract expressionist canvas, while the scent of cooked eggs wafted through the air.

For the most part, however, Sadra was committed, up until his untimely death in 2011, to the ideal of *musik dialektis*. He adopted this focus not just out of dissatisfaction with *musik kontemporer*’s isolation, but as a principled rejection of its acceptance of obscurity. While this focus set Sadra apart from his peers at ASKI Solo, he was far from alone in the broader, and broadening, sphere of *musik kontemporer*. His was but one example of what I characterize as alternative populisms.

29. The contact microphones were mine; Sadra had conscripted me to operate the effects in the control booth of the Gedung Kesenian theater in Jakarta where the work was performed on 12 and 13 September 2004. In describing this piece I also consulted video documentation I obtained from Danis Sugiyanto.
The direction pursued by Sadra, and by others whom I profile in the case studies that follow, represent a populist alternative to what itself was identified as “an alternative” (sebuah alternatif). Suka Hardjana used this formulation as the subtitle for his compilation of documentation from the first six meetings of the Pekan Komponis Muda (Hardjana 1986). The brief introduction, which acknowledges the limited scope of the volume, noting that it provided only documentation and did not include analysis or critical evaluation, does not identify what the PKM and the work it presented were an alternative to. But from Hardjana’s other writing, it can assumed to be first and foremost a situation in which there was little to no musical creativity in “serious” forms. It was an alternative to a cultural ecology in which commercialized popular culture was overwhelmingly dominant.

The opposition of art and pop was one that was fundamental to musik kontemporer. The sense that the terrific blossoming of contemporary music was all “horizontal” and not “vertical,” and had yet to “fulfill the artistic aspirations of music” was a key motivation for Suka Hardjana in proposing the PKM in the first place (chapter 5). The sense that developments in the traditional arts were misdirected, emphasizing their “secondary” functions such as entertainment, was similarly key to Humardani’s efforts to push those at ASKI Solo to fully realize art’s “principal” function of sustaining a “profound spiritual life,” leading young musicians like Pande Made Sukerta and A. L. Suwardi to develop a compositional approach based on the exploration of sound (chapter 4).

There has been, however, a notable shift in how the opposition of art and pop is conceived, a shift signaled by the use of the term industri in place of the term pop. Most literally, industri was a shorthand for the profit-focused media companies, international and Indonesian, that were the driving force behind popular culture’s dominance. By extension, it
also referred metonymically to stylistic traits and aesthetic tendencies of the music those companies promoted. Most incisively, it referred to the realm of musicians and music making that conformed to, or at least had to contend with, the demands of those companies and the audiences they catered to. *Industri* was roughly synonymous with pop, but it no longer involved a blanket dismissal of a whole range of musical genres, as in the case of Hardjana’s equation, before he himself developed a more nuanced perspective, of pop with poison (chapter 5).

In some cases, the distinction between *kontemporer* and *industri* is cast almost as clearly as that between art and pop had been. A preview of the eleventh Pekan Komponis in 2005—the latest remounting of the festival—quoted Waridi, a faculty member at STSI (ASKI) Solo who acted as the festival’s coordinator, stating that the goal was “to spur and provide a creative space” for artists who differed from “*musik industri,*” and instead worked within the “*kontemporer corridor.*”

Beyond such categorical assertions, it was becoming harder to insist on a clear boundary between *kontemporer* and *industri.* One challenge came from the usage of the term *kontemporer* itself. In the 1970s and 80s, the adjective *kontemporer,* when applied to art, was most frequently applied to modern directions in the performing arts that were best exemplified by scenes centered at Taman Ismail Marzuki, the national arts center in Jakarta that was the venue for the PKM. Accordingly, the *Ensiklopedi Musik’s* entry for “*musik kontemporer*” is focused entirely on a discussion of the PKM. Increasingly, however, *musik kontemporer* was being used in a more general sense to describe any current genre of music.

There is no entry for “musik kontemporer” in the Indonesian language Wikipedia, but among the first twenty of 225 results from a search for the term there are artists associated with the term in its initially most common usage: Harry Roesli, Slamet Abdul Sjukur, and Nyak Ina Raseuki. But there are also artists and genres that have nothing to do with this particular history: “Campursari,” “C-pop” (Chinese pop), “Pat Metheny,” “Dangdut,” and “Madonna” (http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search?search=musik+kontemporer, accessed 30 August 2012).\(^{31}\) The network of composers on whom I focus in this study were increasingly unable, then, to claim the term *musik kontemporer* as exclusively their own.

A more serious and vexing challenge was internal, coming from within the ranks of those involved with *musik kontemporer*. Their involvement entailed some investment in the idea of *musik kontemporer* as a distinctive category, though the extent and nature of that investment varied, in part due to how and when they acquired it. Among those profiled in the case studies that follow are those who were not affiliated with the scenes I have focused on in this study. They came to *musik kontemporer* through other institutional and social contexts, contexts that made them receptive to some of its ideals, but did not so fully instill in them one or another of its favored versions of experimentalism or modernism. They were, as we will see, more inclined to populism and popular culture aesthetics.

Everyone involved in *musik kontemporer*, however, must be regarded as coming to it after some combination of more foundational musical experiences and affiliations. *Musik*

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31. Anecdotally, when I asked about a recording I heard in a restaurant in Bali, of MIDI-sequenced arrangements of “most popular Indonesian folksongs” in a style that derived mostly from hugely popular *degung instrumental* genre that was ubiquitous in establishments frequented by tourists, the wait staff described it as “kontemporer” (p.c., 15 July 2005)—probably because of the use of synthesizers. The CD was part 4 in a series of “Lounge Music Degung Bali Instrumentalia,” arranged by I Gusti Sudarsana, and produced by Maharani Record. For more on *degung instrumental*, see (Swindells 2004: 200-204).
*kontemporer* is not, after all, a music that anyone grew up being involved in. What most of those who got their start in the first flourishing of *musik kontemporer* proper did grow up with was one or another form of popular music. For many Western-oriented composers, including no less a figure than Tony Prabowo, progressive rock was the music of choice, a sub-genre that had its own pretension to Art. Some, like Royke Koapaha, continued to play in rock bands, contributing in his case to his confused sense of musical identity (chapter 6). Others, including Prabowo, did not, though it remained an important and enduring influence on his music. For those on the traditionally-based side, the most inspiring figure was Nartosabdho—a figure whose compositions were derided by senior gamelan musicians, but who as others took his populism even further came to be regarded as “a model of artistry” (Perlman 1999: 6).

The generations that emerged in the 1970s and 80s were not encumbered by the kind of deep-seated aversion to the popular demonstrated by Hardjana, Humardani, and other senior figures. That more rigid aesthetic hierarchy was relatively new, and still had limited currency. On the Western-oriented side, this had to do with the predominantly paraclassical constitution of Indonesia’s classical music scene, and the lack of attention to the weightier aspects of the Western art music canon. The situation was slightly different on the traditionally-based side. As Marc Perlman succinctly notes, while the repertoire of Javanese gamelan “contains many long, difficult, challenging compositions that breathe seriousness and majesty,” it has “always included as well tuneful little ditties with playful, or even raunchy, lyrics.” As a tradition it is “capacious,” demonstrating “great powers of incorporation” (Perlman 1999: 4), a corollary of the long history of back and forth between court and village. The new type of populism that followed after Nartosabdho’s pioneering innovations, which frequently drew upon the styles
and aesthetics of commercialized popular culture to which it was a response, proved more difficult to incorporate. This was true not only for those affiliated with academies such as ASKI Solo with their narrower focus on those aspects of the tradition specific to the courts and their immediate environs, but also for those musicians who were not formally trained but nonetheless prominent in what in recent memory was gamelan’s more integrative mainstream.32

The freedom from a more stringent aesthetic hierarchy was, in important respects, positive. For Western-oriented composers, it was a mostly favorable facet of what was an otherwise troubling absence of authority. For traditionally-based composers, it was a return to a mostly enriching openness. For both, it obviated the kind of constrictive orthodoxies that led to an exclusive and isolating economy of prestige, allowing those who chose to branch out greater leeway to respond to and draw upon significant aspects of their immediate cultural ecologies. Composers had greater latitude in choosing how to act musically in the face of industri—how to respond to the overwhelming dominance of commercialized popular culture, which for some meant at least gesturing at getting in industri’s face. The music industry itself was unmoved by a form as peripheral as musik kontemporer, but for most of those involved in musik kontemporer, even those with a populist stance, it remained anathema. Being involved in musik kontemporer came to have less to do with conforming to one or another stylistic paradigm, and more about the idea of maintaining artistic integrity, and avoiding corruption or compromise. Choosing such an involvement meant pursuing not

32. For example, my drum teacher, Wakidi Dwidjomartono, the younger sibling of the renowned drummer Wakidjo (who led the gamelan at RRI Surakarta and recorded extensively, especially on the Kusuma label) and a very highly respected drummer himself, would refer to campursari as “campurshit.” The linguistic mashup is no doubt indebted to his American wife Kathryn Emerson, but his opinions are broadly representative.
just populism, but an alternative populism. How, stylistically, this was interpreted varied considerably, and in that way the freedom from aesthetic hierarchy appeared instead as a problematic lack of an aesthetic anchor. The drift toward eclecticism made it increasingly difficult to say with certainty what 

musik kontemporer was. But for at least most of the composers discussed in this chapter, jettisoning the anchor was a worthwhile gambit, if it allowed their musical endeavors, whatever they might be called, to be more resilient and responsive.

Djaduk Ferianto: Learning from Industri

Building on a Legacy of Populism

Well before Sadra took his own populist turn, there were others pursuing what in certain respects were similar directions. He was preceded, among others, by those from the traditionally-based scene in Jogja, which from its outset had a more populist character. In large part, this has to do with the circumstances of its emergence.

The traditionally-based scene in Jogja has not figured prominently in my discussion so far.\footnote{What I know of the scene in Jogja, beyond the work of Djaduk Ferianto and Sapto Raharjo on which I focus in this chapter, derives primarily from: an interview with Yohanes Subowo, a younger sibling of Blacius Subono who teaches dance at ISI Jogja; an interview with Raharjo, a son of the prominent musician Suhardi, and a member of Djaduk Ferianto’s Kua Etnika ensemble; and most of all from Sutrisno S. Hartana, with whom I have worked for several years, both in Vancouver and in Jogja. While these and other traditionally-based composers in Jogja deserve more attention than I have given them, my sense is that they, like the more traditionally-inclined Trustho, who I mentioned briefly in chapter 2, have not intersected so much with the broader field of 

musik kontemporer.} That scene was slower to develop than the one based at ASKI Solo, and has never been as committed to the kind of experimentalist aesthetic favored at the PKM. For these same reasons, it is of considerable interest in terms of the changing face of 

musik kontemporer that
is the focus of this chapter. There was no parallel in Jogja to the hothouse environment that Humardani fostered at ASKI Solo, which as we saw in chapter 4 supported the development of a radically new compositional approach based on the exploration of sound. ASKI’s sister institution, Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia Yogyakarta (ASTI Jogja, since 1984 part of ISI Jogja), was focused more on dance, and its director and instructors did not prioritize innovation or encourage independent thought. In the opinion of Hardja Susilo, a dancer and musician from Jogja who since the late 1950s has been based in the US, ASTI was very “conscious” of “formal education,” and “the music part of it is not well taken care of” (Hardja Susilo, p.c., 21 November 2006).

Djaduk Ferianto (1964–), in confirming that the gap between his appearance at the PKM in 1987, and that of Djoko Walujo, eighteen years his senior, in 1981,34 did in fact reflect a real lack of an intermediate generation, by way of explanation noted that the “culture” in Jogja differed from that in Solo. Because of its “feudalistic” character, the “process of regeneration” and thus its “growth” was “very, very slow” (Djaduk Ferianto, p.c., 2 August 2005). Djaduk considered himself lucky to have studied visual art at ASRI (Akademi Seni Rupa Indonesia); the “culture” there was more “egalitarian” and “democratic,” and “freed each student to discuss, to have opinions.” This was in contrast to ASTI and AMI, which by his account rigidly followed a conservatory model, and were “feudal” in insisting that instructors knew best.35

34. The gap of fourteen years between Djoko Walujo (1946–) and Otok Bima Sidharta (1960–), Djaduk’s older brother and co-composer of the piece presented at the PKM, is only slightly less.

35. Djaduk’s sense of “feudal” is perhaps somewhat idiosyncratic, but the term itself is widely used in Indonesia. As Adrian Vickers notes, it is, as “a trope representing the past,” a “powerful term in social discourse, regardless of its accuracy from a Western analytical position” (Vickers 1996: 5).
Djaduk’s years at ASRI were one stop along a circuitous route to establishing himself as a creative musician and one of the most active and prominent figures in the Jogja scene. He gained his foundation in the arts at the private studio of his father, the noted choreographer and impresario Bagong Kussudiardjo. Kussudiardjo’s early work, shaped by studies with the American choreographer Martha Graham, was decidedly modernist, but he made his career producing more populist amalgams of regional Indonesian dance traditions for national events, government sponsored cultural missions to other countries, and his network of dance schools (Murgiyanto 1991: 82-167). Djaduk thus grew up studying dance and music in a milieu whose aesthetic orientation was contemporary—though in a different sense than that at ASKI Solo or TIM and IKJ in Jakarta—and at the same time grounded in tradition—and more specifically, despite its pan-Indonesian ambitions, Javanese tradition. He studied “traditional music, in particular kendhang,” in his youth, but after finishing high school, his father wanted him to study Western music at AMI. He chose to study visual art at ASRI instead, but dropped out before completing his degree as he was too busy with “jobs in music” (Djaduk Ferianto, p.c., 27 July 2004).

Some of Djaduk’s music, such as the work he and his brother Otok Bima Sidharta presented at the 1987 PKM, has been for Javanese gamelan. And some of it has had an experimentalist bent, such as the piece “Ngeng” from 1993, for three performers making contorted vocal sounds.36 But more centrally, Djaduk’s idea of kontemporer is grounded in a logic of fusion: of different traditional musics with each other and, most distinctively, with elements from Western popular genres. His intentionally accessible aesthetic sensibility is

36. I have not heard this piece, but composer Nick Brooke has singled it out as one of the most striking pieces of musik kontemporer he has encountered in Indonesia (p.c., 2 December 2011).
best exemplified by his work with Kua Etnika, an ensemble he founded in 1996 whose instrumentation includes a wide range of traditional instruments, from Indonesia and elsewhere, as well as an array of modern percussion and, very prominently, synthesizer.\textsuperscript{37} Their debut performance, a program of works titled \textit{Nang Ning Nong} that was also released as an independently produced CD with the same title, featured Balinese gamelan \textit{gong kebyar} on all but one piece.\textsuperscript{38} There are clear references to Balinese idioms—though only occasionally, as in “Bali Kagol,” which opens with an abbreviated \textit{gineman trompong} played on \textit{reyong},\textsuperscript{39} and includes a brief and not especially explosive \textit{kebyar} passage as a transition between sections, is there an incorporation of the most distinctive features of traditional Balinese music. Overall, however, they do not dominate, but instead alternate with more or less specific references to other Indonesian musics, such as the distinctive drumming of Sundanese \textit{jaipongan},\textsuperscript{40} and non-Indonesian musics, as with the use of Hindustani \textit{tabla}. These various references are held together compositionally through form and by the overall sound. Formally, the pieces on \textit{Nang Ning Nong} consist of sequences of short episodes, mostly made up of short melodic phrases, that are sometimes stated only once, but more often

\textsuperscript{37} See Raharja (2001) for a profile of this ensemble by a former member.

\textsuperscript{38} My comments here are based on the CD recording. The direction Djaduk was taking with Kua Etnika was already evident, however, in a performance I attended in 1994.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Gineman} are metrically free preludes, played by a solo instrument such as the lower-register gong-chime \textit{trompong}, sometimes accompanied by other instruments such as \textit{suling} and \textit{rebab}. They are associated with older repertoire.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Jaipongan} is popular Sundanese gamelan genre, notable as the one “purely Indonesian” genre to become popular beyond one specific region (Manuel and Baier 1986). Developed by Gugum Gembira in the late 1970s, \textit{jaipongan} fuses aspects of several different Sundanese genres. The “flamboyant and virtuosic” (ibid.:102) drumming derives from the older genre \textit{ketuk tilu}, which itself draws upon the martial art form \textit{pencak silat}. There is one drummer, who plays an expanded set of \textit{kendang}, one large and up to five small, and manipulates the pitch of the large \textit{kendang} by pressing on the large head with (almost invariably) his foot, an effect that is heightened by amplification. The \textit{kendang} and drumming style made popular by \textit{jaipongan} has been quite widely adopted by Javanese \textit{wayang} troupes.
are repeated two or four times. The internal structure of the phrases also tends to be very square. The result is that the pieces are, as Sono Seni Ensemble member and STSI (ASKI) Solo instructor Danis Sugiyanto put it, “easy to predict” (p.c., 23 July 2004). Sonically, the juxtaposition of various “ethnic” instruments is smoothed over by other elements of the arrangement and how the recording is engineered—which is paralleled by how sound reinforcement is handled in live performance. There is ample use of synthesizer—five of the eight pieces begin with an ambient drone—and assorted non-gamelan percussion instruments. The latter provide texture, in the case of shakers, rainsticks, and wind chimes made of bamboo or metal, or accenting flourishes, in the case of the shimmering glissandi of a mark tree\textsuperscript{41} or the swell of a cymbals that frequently precede strokes of gong. Everything is bathed in digital reverberation. All of these aspects serve as a connection to a globalized production aesthetic that links otherwise disparate genres of popular music, from adult contemporary to New Age. Djaduk does in fact acknowledge New Age artists such as Kitaro as “references” (Djaduk Ferianto, p.c., 27 July 2004).\textsuperscript{42}

Learning from Industri

Djaduk’s aesthetic follows directly from his more positive attitude toward industri. He stands out among those involved in musik kontemporer as a defender of what industri has to offer as a model. Djaduk spoke of “knowing well the issues in the world of pop culture,” as he “studied in pop culture.” Much of what he learned was practical, having to do with how to

\textsuperscript{41} A mark tree is “a set of 30–40 thin brass tubes, graduated in length from 10 to 30 cm and suspended from a stick” (\textit{Grove Music Online}, s.v. “Wind chime,” accessed 18 September 2012).

\textsuperscript{42} Subsequent recordings by Kua Etnika such as Unen-Unen, though also self-produced, are even more slick in their production values.
run an independent studio like that of his father. “We are, in quotation marks, ‘professional artists’,” Djaduk said of Kua Etnika, adding that they were “responsible to that choice.” He spoke of effective management, of securing “access” to resources, funding, and performance opportunities. Their CDs function as business cards, and they have sought and received sponsorship from the cigarette company Djarum. Other professional practices that Djaduk picked up from *industri* have more obvious aesthetic effects. He made a point of noting that Kua Etnika has invested in its own sound reinforcement equipment—it’s “good to have your own mics,” and to do soundchecks, as “better production” means that “people can enjoy” (Djaduk Ferianto, p.c., 27 July 2004). Lighting also added to people’s enjoyment, and indeed Djaduk’s concert presentations typically make use of the kind of colored lighting, and occasionally also dry ice, more typical of pop productions.

Djaduk also noted that he and Kua Etnika had learned to “live in two worlds,” one that is “realis” and one that is “idealis.” With some projects, however, Djaduk and his colleagues seem to have adopted fully to the “realist” world. The debut recording of Orkes Sinten Remen, a group he founded a year after Kua Etnika, in 1997, was released on cassette rather than CD to reach a broader market.43 It features a kroncong-inflected cover of John Denver’s “Leaving on a Jet Plane”—and, conversely, a country-inflected cover of the Gesang Martohartono’s “Caping Gunung.”44 In 2004, members of this group backed up presidential and vice-presidential candidates on the television special “Tribute to Indonesia” that aired on

43. The cassette, titled *Komedi Putar*, was released by the company Dian Pramudita Kusuma in 1999, but it is the logo of the cigarette company Djarum, credited with “presenting” (*mempersembahkan*) the group, that appears on the front of the insert. They (Kua Etnika) took over production and distribution with their second release, *Parodi Iklan*, from 2000.

44. Gesang Martohartono was a notable composer of *langgam kroncong*, discussed in chapter 1. He is best known for his song “Bengawan Solo.”
the eve of the election.45 These more lucrative endeavors help to “subsidize” Kua Etnika’s studio in Jogja, which is used not only for the rehearsals and recording projects of Djaduk and its other members, but also for presentations of “kontemporer works” of music, dance, and theater (ibid.).

To speak of subsidizing “idealis” work with that which is “realis” involves a recognition of the distinction between the two. Djaduk has also acknowledged the existence of a gap between the two worlds, speaking of them as “two camps” that are “mutually suspicious.” But far from accepting that they and the worlds they are intended for are inescapably irreconcilable, he advocates for interaction and exchange between those involved with musik kontemporer and those who work in the realm of industri. Getting to know musicians in the pop world, especially those in the jazz scene, Djaduk realized that they had “extraordinary musical references;” they were familiar, from having travelled abroad, with a broad range of music, including “musik kontemporer” and different forms of “new music.” They had a “vision for musik kontemporer in Indonesia” (ibid.).

Among several musicians Djaduk mentioned was keyboardist Dwiki Dharmawan, who with his group Krakatau followed, according to Djaduk, his “desire to make musik kontemporer” with “a basis in tradition,” even though “his own foundation is not tradition, but pop” (ibid.). When I interviewed Dharmawan, he explained that for its first decade Krakatau was highly successful playing pop songs in a light jazz-rock fusion style—which as Djaduk noted was what jazz was generally understood to be in Indonesia. Sales of their first five albums averaged around half-a-million copies each. In the early 1990s, Dharmawan and

45. The program was broadcast by Metro TV on 4 July 2004. All of the candidates were present, except for the incumbent President, Megawati Sukarnoputri. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who ultimately won the race, has released several pop albums of his own.
fellow co-founder Pra Budidharma grew increasingly tired of playing in this style, which they had adopted after signing a recording contract and working with a producer. They became artistically dissatisfied, and wished to return to something more like the “progressive” style they had started out with. They began to incorporate elements of traditional Sundanese karawitan, and eventually reformulated the group to include traditional musicians. Their first album in this configuration, Mystical Mist, sold only 44,000 copies, or roughly 10% of what they used to sell. And whereas before they were routinely nominated for music awards, they now no longer fit any of the categories. As Dharmawan described it, they have effectively been “thrown out of the industri world” (Dwiki Dharmawan, p.c., 19 August 2005).

Djaduk, for his part, has not only adopted much of the production aesthetics of popular music, but has been eager to break into the world of industri. He enthusiastically accepted an invitation from the Indonesian television station RCTI to collaborate with another jazz keyboardist, Aminoto Kosin, for the program Dua Warna. Over the course of two years, they did “six 90-minute shows” that aired “during evening primetime” in which Djaduk and Kua Etnika joined a group of Jakarta-based studio musicians to back up some of Indonesia’s best known pop singers. As R. Anderson Sutton has noted, in a critical analysis of ‘the collaboration, “though the title of the show suggests a balance between two ‘colors’—pop/international style on the one hand and ‘ethnic’/indigenous” on the other—neither the audio nor the video components of the broadcast presented anything approaching an even balance.” Kua Etnika added mostly non-pitched percussion to pop arrangements that were made in advance by Kosin (Sutton 2002b: 18-22).

46. For a more extensive profile of Krakatau, which both corroborates and complicates Dharmawan’s narrative from my interview with him, see Harnish and Wallach (2013).
Djaduk was able to strike something closer to parity in more recent work with Kua Etnika, in a configuration that combines four musicians playing various gamelan instruments (Javanese saron and bonang, Balinese reyong, and Sundanese kendang), five playing pop instruments (keyboards, electric guitar and bass guitar, drum kit), Djaduk playing assorted percussion, and Trie Utami, who sang on Krakatau’s first album. The gamelan instruments are featured prominently—on one video clip, Utami introduces ensemble member Purwanto playing “the only one in Indonesia, and the only one in the world: solo bonang.”

The basic format, however, derives from pop, whether a funk vamp underlying solos, Djaduk’s song “Sintren,” or an arrangement of the theme from Mission Impossible.

In reinventing Krakatau, Dwiki Dharmawan very clearly sought to break out of the stylistic limits of the pop-oriented jazz mainstream in Indonesia, limits he felt were constricting. But when I interviewed him, nothing he said suggested any identification with musik kontemporer, especially not in the understanding of the term I am concerned with in this study. Toward the end of our conversation, when I asked him about the term, it was clear he understood it in a general sense, to refer to anything “newly created in the present,” including dangdut. His concern was more with the inadequacy of the categories used by industri, in particular because of the challenges it posed in terms of “positioning” Krakatau (Dwiki Dharmawan, p.c., 19 August 2005).

Djaduk appears to many in the realm of musik kontemporer to have moved in a direction

50. Dharmawan did not bring up the term kontemporer himself. In discussing available categories, he spoke instead of how he preferred “world fusion” (in English) to “world music.”
opposite to that taken by Dharmawan. Franki Raden commented that “the style of Djaduk with Kua Etnika has increasingly approached the style of commercial pop with a little bit of ethnic flavor,” adding “in other words, the originality evident in Kua Etnika’s early period is no longer apparent.” Djaduk has indeed sought to find a place for himself in the world of industri. But instead of turning his back on musik kontemporer, he would like to bring it along with him. In relaying his admiration for artists such as Aminoto Kosin and Dwiki Dharmawan to Suka Hardjana, he suggested that maybe we—meaning those in the kontemporer world—were mixing with the wrong circles. But kontemporer composers were “extremely a priori.” It was “as though there was a kind of credo,” that “if we associated with them”—those in the pop world—“we were committing a sin.”

Djaduk has increasingly focused on fitting into industri. But though he sees himself as having emerged from the kontemporer realm, and continues to seek the approval of arbiters such as Suka Hardjana, his aesthetic sensibility has always been somewhat at odds with the experimentalism of kontemporer. In speaking with him, he complained of musik kontemporer becoming “slow,” “not dynamic.” He believed that musik kontemporer’s “most important characteristic” was “deconstructing or changing” what was “mainstream,” but this did not mean it had to be “difficult.” He made passing reference to John Cage, in recounting how he learned that “what I can’t translate in the language of sound, I can with visual language,” but this seems to have been more the idea of Cageian multimedia than its actual practice; the comment followed his noting how he learned about lighting from industri. When it came to encountering actual work from the American experimental tradition, he was considerably less enthusiastic. He recounted how he and a journalist walked out Alvin Lucier’s presentation at the 1998 Art Summit, as he found his music “boring.” “My ears couldn’t take it.” He faulted
this on Lucier’s music, declaring that it “was not for listening.”

Sadra relayed how sometime in 2002 or 2003, Djaduk and his colleagues came to Solo, and declared that “the time had come” for “friends in Solo” to “stop exploring, with sound exploration.” They were “too serious,” and their work “didn’t sell” (tidak laku). Sadra was taken aback, that Djaduk, who as he noted was a small kid sitting with his father at Sadra’s performance at Bentara Budaya in Jogja in the early 1980s, would presume to tell him what he should do. Sadra accepted that Djaduk was indeed successful, but also told him “we also want to choose a path” (I Wayan Sadra, p.c., 5 August 2005). Djaduk argued the same point when I spoke with him in 2004, in defending his decision to prioritize “communication” with his audience. He claimed to “value the choice of my friends” who maintained “a kind of credo,” that “musik kontemporer” was “not for lots of people,” but for themselves—though he also characterized this attitude as “fairly egoistic.” He also claimed to “respect” the criticism of others, and asked them to “please respect my choice.” He insisted he could make “something more complex,” and conform to the idea that “kontemporer . . . is always complex.” But “that is not my choice.” He was not, however, a slave to industri. “I do not serve industri 100%. I also study there, but I have my idealism.”

Djaduk demonstrates a strong desire to convince those whose opinions he apparently values to share in his particular approach to a more populist version of musik kontemporer—one informed by certain ideas of professionalism, as distinct from Sadra’s work with the Sono Seni Ensemble, which at times was somewhat rough around the edges; and one consistent

51. The piece Djaduk described was “Music for Gamelan Instruments, Microphones, Amplifiers and Loudspeakers,” which involves placing individual bonang pencon over microphones to shape feedback, the pitch of which other players attempt to match on gender, producing beating patterns. Like Lucier’s other explorations of acoustic phenomenon, the piece is not just about the abstract idea, as Djaduk claimed, but is very definitely intended for listening.
with his penchant for more straightforward musical ideas. He wanted to see a different shift in musik kontemporer’s center of aesthetic authority, not from foreign models to native traditions, but from avant-gardism to a more “communicative” aesthetic. But as the polemic between him and his friends, from Solo and elsewhere, indicates, he has had rather less success in this regard than he has in making inroads into industri.

**Sapto Raharjo: A Maverick Challenges the Fold**

*An Independent Experimentalist*

There had, in fact, been significant changes in musik kontemporer of the sort Djaduk advocated, starting in the mid 1990s. But rather than a shift in its aesthetic center, the change instead took the form of a diversification, one that occurred not just within musik kontemporer’s own circles, but as importantly through a repositioning of musik kontemporer in the broader musical scene. One of the most significant contributions in this respect came from Sapto Raharjo (1955–2009), who founded and directed the Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival, an event that had its roots in a festival of “contemporary gamelan composition” but ended up becoming something else.

Sapto Raharjo falls in between the categories of the Western-oriented and the traditionally-based. This is not so much because he was both, but because he was neither, at least according to the more restricted sense in which I use the terms. I have characterized as Western-oriented those who have had significant formal training or active involvement in a music that is understood in Indonesia to be Western. For nearly all of those in musik kontemporer, this was Western art music, though many of Sapto’s peers who studied at IKJ
and AMI Jogja were initially inspired by progressive rock.\(^{52}\) I have used traditionally-based to describe those who studied at ASKI Solo and other institutions for the study of karawitan and other traditional Indonesian performing art forms, most of whom grew up playing gamelan or other traditional musics.

Sapto played some gamelan in his youth, and continued to use gamelan in his work up until his death in 2009. But he never became a gamelan musician per se.\(^{53}\) He also grew up hearing Western art music, on his parents’ radio and from a neighbor who played piano, and formed rock bands and folk combos while in high school. After dropping out, he decided against trying to apply to AMI, as he was worried that the “discipline” of reading notation would “wreck” the sense of musicality he had already acquired, which he identified by singing a short phrase in the pelog scale using Javanese syllables. Instead, he convinced the director of the film and theater arts academy (Akademi Seni Drama dan Film, ASDRAFI) to let him enter and study incidental music for theater (musik ilustrasi), which he did for three years, from 1975 to 1977.

Sapto did not pursue a career composing for theater, film, or television, however. In terms of his creative work, he mostly composed music for concert presentations, most of which he produced himself. For one of his earliest productions, Yogyaharmonik 78—which he presented in Jogja and also in Jakarta at TIM, entirely independently of the curatorial agency of Suka Hardjana—he attempted to convey the “distinctive sounds” of Jogja with an

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52. Western-oriented is, of course, equally appropriate for any of the genres of popular music that follow Western models—and also equally in need of problematization and qualification. For contributions along these lines, see Baulch (2007) and Luvaas (2009).

53. Sathya Burchman, in a chapter profiling Sapto Raharjo from his M.A. thesis, reports that “most gamelan musicians would not identify Sapto as a gamelan player per se, but rather as someone who has appropriated gamelan instruments and some techniques for another kind of music” (Burchman 2000: 100-101).
ensemble of “synthesizer, electone, acoustic guitars, drum, violin, flute” and vocalists (Raharjo 2005: xxi, 73-75). In 1986, he sought to integrate gamelan into his work in a production with the English language title Gamelan Meets Synthesizer Art Rock. Sapto continued to explore combining gamelan with Western instruments in the 1990s, through collaborations with French and Italian jazz musicians that resulted in performances in Indonesia and at jazz festivals in Europe.\textsuperscript{54}

This aspect of Sapto’s work followed a logic of fusion akin to that of Djaduk Ferianto, though it tended to be less slick in its production aesthetic, and focused less on careful arrangements than on rambling improvised solos. Other aspects of Sapto’s work spring from more self-consciously experimentalist inclinations. Sapto’s experimentalisms are distinct, however, from the strains prominent at the Pekan Komponis Muda. They neither came out of an intensive hot house like atmosphere such as that fostered by Gendhon Humardani at ASKI Solo, nor did they take their inspiration exclusively from the models coming out of the Western art music tradition conveyed to students at IKJ and AMI Jogja by Slamet Abdul Sjukur and Jack Body—though Sapto was also interested in those models. Sapto found at least as much stimulus in technology and popular music, signaled explicitly in the titles of his self-produced programs “Digital Sound Experimental” from 1990, and “KIN: Reflection of the Now and Future Experimental Rock,” from 1991.

The result was a more eclectic experimentalism, exemplified well by the multimedia concert-length events Sapto began producing in the 2000s. His 2003 \textit{Teror Mata Sapi}, which

\textsuperscript{54} Four CD recordings came out of these collaborations over a period of three years: \textit{Borobudur Suite} and \textit{Merapi} with saxophonist André Jaume, released in 1995 and 1996; \textit{Java} with accordionist and multi-instrumentalist Miqueù Montanaro, released in 1997; and \textit{Katak Katak Bertanggo} with vibraphonist Alex Grillo, released in 1998.
he touted as “a new concept of making music,” comprised seven pieces, ranging from a sequenced composition for sampled violin that bore some resemblance to American minimalism, to a piece where the sound is the byproduct of a group of performers playing hopscotch on an amplified stage plot. The opening number, “Teror DJ,” combined the two aspects, with the entire crew of performers bouncing up and down, pumping their fists in the air, and chanting, in time to dance-club style electronica, replete with moving colored lights. Sapto tied all of this together in his role as MC, providing extensive commentary and exegesis on the work and the creative process that produced it, with extensive use of PowerPoint.\(^{55}\)

Sapto’s impulse to experiment was evident from early on. While still in high school, he became bored with playing in bands—as he put it, he grew “jenuh,” a word that describes the feeling of having had too much of something—and began experimenting with combining band and gamelan instruments. He also created music using sets of cans of various sizes, from small paint cans to oil drums, which he played at a fair at the end of the school year (Sapto Raharjo, p.c., 29 July 2004). During his first year at ASDRAFI, he put on a performance of what he called “Wayang Kreasul,” with puppets made of manila paper and fluorescent paint that glowed under ultraviolet lights—an idea he got from going to discotheques—and accompaniment by his Pads Group band. A newspaper review called the production “Wayang Kurang Ajar” (rude wayang) (Raharjo 2005: 67-69).

During this time, Sapto was also making an effort to follow “what’s the term, the latest

\(^{55}\) My account of this work is based largely on video documentation of the performance at Taman Budaya Yogyakarta Sriwedani on 8 June 2003, augmented by Sapto’s own account (Raharjo 2005: xxv, 163-165). The piece was intended as a light-hearted response to life in a post 9/11 world; the title is a play on telor mata sapi, an egg fried sunny-side-up (Sapto Raharjo, p.c., 29 July 2004).
developments in music,” reading not only the Indonesian magazine Aktuil, but also the publications of two foreign-sponsored cultural organizations in Jogja, the Dutch-funded Yayasan Karta Pustaka and the Lembaga Indonesia Perancis (France Indonesia Institute), as well as the magazine produced by the United States Information Service. From these he became familiar with the names of John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen, and some idea of what they did, though he had not yet had the opportunity to hear their music. More immediately, he saw a production by the theater director Putu Wijaya—a key figure in the tradisi baru movement based at TIM (chapter 3)—that he described as “wild, almost without form,” and that “caused my ideas to broaden.” In 1976 he met Jack Body, participating in the production of the television documentary “What is Indonesian Music?” that Body organized with Ed Van Ness (chapter 3). From their discussions of “musik kontemporer, new and avant-garde works” Sapto “received many new insights” (Raharjo 2005: 72).

Inviting the Maverick into the Fold

It was not, however, until the late 1980s that Sapto began to more directly engage with the experimentalism of the international avant-garde. In 1988, a program officer from the Goethe Institut contacted Sapto to let him know that Dieter Mack would be visiting Indonesia, along with a group of five German musicians. In addition to a performance at ISI Jogja, Mack and his group presented a concert together with Sapto and his group at a private venue north of the city that closed with an unplanned improvisation involving both groups.

That same year, Sapto began an association with the radio station Geronimo, an association that would continue through the rest of his life and that, as we will see, supported and informed his subsequent endeavors. Initially he produced a program titled “Apresiasi
Music” (Music Appreciation) that ran once a week for one hour, from 11:00 PM to midnight. The program was noted in an essay on music in a volume commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Taman Ismail Marzuki arts center in Jakarta as one of two radio program to “broadcast and discuss experimental works of music” (Mulyadi 1994: 137). The following year, in 1989, Sapto became further involved with the station, both in its management through planning programming, and in producing broadcasts. Among the special programs he produced were those that hewed closer to the pop format of the station, such as “Three Days of Rock” in 1991. But one of the first—the first noted in his autobiography—was a shorter program titled “Musik Garda Depan 4 Negara” (Avant-garde music from four countries). The inclusion of a broadcast realization of Cage’s “silent” piece, “4’33”, resulted in the phone “ringing off the hook” as listeners called wondering if there was a “technical problem” or “operator error” (Raharjo 2005: 114). The other composers on the program reflected Sapto’s rather eclectic sense of what constitutes the avant-garde. Two figures canonical in Indonesia, Slamet Abdul Sjukur and Jack Body, were joined by Leonard Eto, then artistic director of the Japanese taiko group Kodo (Bender 2012: 102), and Shlomo Bat-Ain, an American musician who, from the scant traces he’s left on the infosphere that is the World Wide Web, seems to play fusion jazz with world music accents.56

It was also only after Sapto had established himself as a creative musician that he began to make direct connections with others in the field of musik kontemporer. Frequently, it was others who initiated contact with him. Most of them were from scenes other than the one at

56. Mentioned neither in Grove Music Online or allmusic.com, a Google search for Shlomo Bat-Ain did turn up listings for two out-of-print LPs on Amazon.com, and a single track on soundcloud.com, a slower tempo funk groove featuring rambling solos on electric guitar and sitar (https://soundcloud.com/shlomo-bat-ain, accessed 17 June 2013).
AMI/ISI Jogja. The first was Harry Roesli, who commented on Sapto’s work in a newspaper review in 1980, after which he met Sapto on a visit to Jogja. Other connections came even later. Franki Raden—who Tony Prabowo noted deeply admired Sapto’s work, claiming enthusiastically that he was “experimental before us” (Tony Prabowo, p.c., 7 May 2005)—wrote an article titled “Sapto Rahardjo, Profil Komponis Garda Depan” (Sapto Raharjo, profile of an avant-garde composer) in 1992, after meeting Sapto at his “Non Stop 3 Days Music Concert” titled “WIN.” The following year, 1993, Sapto, Raden, and Roesli appeared together on a concert in Jogja, presumably organized by Sapto, titled “Musik Untuk Generasi Masa Depan” (Music for the future generation). The program also included Ben Pasaribu, whose path to musik kontemporer was, like Sapto, not through any of the scenes that had formed in the 1970s and 80s in Indonesia, but unlike Sapto involved a more decisive encounter with the international avant-garde through his studies with Alvin Lucier at Wesleyan University.57

Whereas Raden presented a re-worked version of “Dilarang Bertepuk Tangan di Dalam Toilet,” the musique concrète composition he first presented at the PKM in 1981 (Chapter 3), which as a review of the concert noted “gave a sound picture not at all associated with conventional instruments, or the skills to play them,” the music of the other three “often used a more physical beat.” Sapto’s piece “even carried a funky rhythm” (review reproduced in Raharjo 2005:124-125). The following year, however, Sapto produced a more austere experimentalist work. For the 1994 Nur Gora Rupa festival in Solo, he presented “Kutut

57. The nephew of Amir Pasaribu, Ben Pasaribu began his musical career “as a drummer in a rock group,” then studied ethnomusicology at the University of North Sumatra (Grove Music Online, s.v. “Pasaribu, Ben,” by Franki Raden, accessed 28 June 2005). There he met Edward Van Ness, who encouraged and then helped arrange for him to go to Wesleyan (Edward Van Ness, p.c., 14 June 2005).
Manggung,” a piece he identified as the “peak” of his use of a Roland S-50 digital sampling keyboard. The primary material for the piece was samples of *perkutut*, a type of dove very popular with Javanese bird aficionados, played by Sapto on the keyboard or in automated sequences using a computer. For three minutes in the middle of the seventeen minute piece the samples formed a short repeating four-beat pattern, but mostly the effect went between a bird market in an echo chamber and denser clouds of electroacoustic sound. Sapto alternated between kneeling in front of his keyboard and computer, which were set up on the floor, and walking around the large *pendhapa*, recording other sounds with a microphone or playing snippets of the popular gamelan piece *gendhing* “Kutut Manggung” on a portable cassette player. For the last section of the piece, Sapto distributed clay bird whistles to the audience, who were invited to join in (Raharjo 2005: 126-129).

58. My comments are based on Sapto’s account of the piece, and from reviewing video documentation of the performance, which I attended.

*From Artist to Impresario: Founding the Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival*

Within Sapto’s output, “Kutut Manggung” is the piece that most closely aligns with the kind of experimentalist imperative central to the identity of *musik kontemporer*. 1994, the year that Sapto composed it, was also the year that Sapto cemented his association with central figures in the Indonesian *musik kontemporer* world. He was involved in the founding of Asosiasi Komponis Indonesia (Indonesian Composers Association, AKI), the idea for which came up at the Nur Gora Rupa festival, and worked as one of its administrators until 2000. In that capacity, he attended the 1997 meeting of the Asian Composers League (ACL) in Manilla, and served on the steering committee of the 1999 ACL meeting in Jogja. By his account, he...
was instrumental in convincing his committee members that it was safe to go ahead with the meeting in Jogja despite the rash of riots and incidents of anti-Chinese violence, the worst of which took place in Jakarta, in the wake of the Suharto regime’s response to the Asian financial crisis—riots which led Suharto to step down in May of 1998. As the “Executive Chairperson,” he oversaw all aspects of the conference and festival’s organization.

By the 1999 ACL meeting, organizing events had become key to Sapto’s professional identity—perhaps even eclipsing, and certainly overtaking for a number of years, his work as a composer. His primary focus as an event organizer was not musik kontemporer, however, but rather, in name at least, gamelan. Sapto was the founder, driving force, and main personality—Marc Perlman aptly uses the term “impresario” (Perlman 1999: 2)—behind the Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival. The YGF, which was to be the subject of the second book in a planned trilogy that started with Sapto’s autobiography (Raharjo 2005: .08-viii), is in turn the event with which Sapto was most closely associated. The YGF, which has involved over one hundred different artists and ensembles, including many groups from abroad, is carried out with a small army of volunteers, and attracts sizable audiences of mostly college-aged youth. It has been held every year since the first in 1995, except for 1998, when it was officially cancelled after foreign governments posted travel advisories. Despite this a few individuals from France and USA joined with “close associates” from several Indonesian cities to mount a one day event. It has continued unabated after Sapto’s death, thanks to the dedication of the core team of organizers Sapto had assembled.

The YGF had its roots in events which seemed to reflect Sapto’s strengthening orientation in the early 1990s toward musik kontemporer. The first gamelan-centered event Sapto organized was a concert as part of the 1993 Festival Kesenian Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta
Arts Festival). The program honored Wasitodipuro’s contributions through a remounting of his 1952 magnum opus, *Jaya Manggala Gita* (chapter 2), but also looked to more recent innovations involving computer generated compositions by RM Wasisto Surjodiningrat and Sapto himself.\(^5^9\)

The second event, held in 1994 a few months after Nur Gora Rupa, was a “Festival” of “Komposisi Gamelan Kontemporer” (Contemporary Gamelan Composition) that was rather more focused on *kontemporer* than it was on gamelan. Of the four composers featured on the “Festival,” which was actually just a single concert, Djaduk Ferianto had the most extensive involvement with gamelan, though by that point he was already exploring the kind of fusions he would realize most fully through Kua Etnika. Slamet Abdul Sjukur had not yet composed for complete gamelan, though he had composed for a double-manual *gender* that he commissioned from the visual artist Hajar Satoto (Slamet Abdul Sjukur, p.c., 09 September 2004).\(^6^0\) Sapto himself was generally regarded as “someone who has appropriated gamelan instruments and some techniques for another kind of music” (Burchman 2000: 100-101). The fourth, Ben Pasaribu, had involved gamelan in some of his compositions, including those he composed at Wesleyan, but as an ethnic Batak from North Sumatra, gamelan played little role in the cultural milieu in which he grew up and worked.

**Gamelan as Spirit, or Pretext**

Sapto came to regard these events as precursors to the YGF. In my interview with him in


\(^{60}\) This was the instrument I saw Sjukur perform on—in a collaboration with Suprapto Suryodarmo, the conceiver of *Wayang Budha* (chapter 4), at Nur Gora Rupa—mentioned briefly in the introduction. I later reviewed video documentation of the performance obtained from TBS. Sjukur showed me the instrument when I visited him in his home on 20 August 2005.
2004, he referred to the 1993 concert as his “first experiment or research” for the YGF, while in a retrospective article from 2001, the year of the sixth YGF, he spoke of the 1993 and 1994 concerts as “the basis towards expanding the event on a higher level.” The direction of growth was, however, in the terms Suka Hardjana used to describe the growth of the Indonesian music world in his 1980 lecture, more “horizontal” than “vertical” (chapter 5). Even more than the Yogyakarta Contem- porary Music Festival (chapter 6)—a younger event that developed out of the milieu that the YGF had fostered, and which in its first iteration was similarly eclectic—the YGF prioritized participation over advancing one or another notion of artistic excellence. It had no particular aesthetic agenda, but was instead defined simply as an international gathering of “gamelan lovers.”

This is not to suggest there were not certain prevalent aesthetic tendencies. These were, however, largely the byproduct of the way that programming was carried out and how the event was structured. As Sapto declared in his retrospective, the YGF has “never been known to be discriminative towards its participants,” adding “If there ever was a time that we rejected those who wanted to play in the concert, it was because the agenda was already fully booked.” The YGF did not even insist on the basic criteria that participants had to play gamelan. Perlman noted how the 1997 festival included “a small ensemble of Sumat- ran instruments” led by “a young musician from Medan . . . in a fiery updating of Melayu musical traditions” that had “no relation to the gamelan” (ibid.). Jody Diamond, in a more extensive review of the same festival, noted there were also groups from Padang Panjang, West Sumatra, and Palu, Central Sulawesi, which similarly had nothing to do with gamelan (Diamond 1997). One of the more spectacular presentations I witnessed at the 2005 festival was by a thirty-plus member diatonic angklung ensemble from Bandung, of the sort that
Slamet Abdul Sjukur subverted for his 1975 production for the folklore festival in Dijon (chapter 3). In this case, the group was fully representative of the tradition invented by Daeng Sutigna, even including a rendition of “The Blue Danube” in their set.

Alongside non-gamelan ensembles that represented traditional (or quasi- or neo-traditional) musics from other parts of Indonesia were non-gamelan presentations that in different ways referenced gamelan. One of the concerts at the 2004 festival opened with a piece conceived and organized by Alex Dea called “Jogja Mix,” which in title referenced John Cage’s “Williams Mix” and “Fontana Mix” but was effectively a localization of his “Imaginary Landscape no. 4” for twelve radios. Twelve radios were used for this piece as well, scanning the airwaves of Jogja, but in this case three stations had been asked to play recordings of Wasitodipuro playing gender. The point was to draw attention to how little gamelan was heard on radio. Other pieces, such as a “soundscape and dance improvisation” by Weizen Ho, an “interdisciplinary performance devisor” from Malaysia, were more celebratory than critical, incorporating samples of gamelan along with other vaguely ethnic sounds into electronic dance music reminiscent of Goa trance.

Of the ensembles that did play gamelan, more often than not they combined it with other instruments or other elements, or used it in ways that had little relationship to traditional practice. Also at the 2004 festival, the group Gong Dolly Gong joined three balungan instruments, gong, and kendhang with electric bass, two electric guitars, and drum kit, and

61. Alex Dea is an alumnus of Wesleyan’s World Music program who has been based in Indonesia and Malaysia since the early 1990s. Dea has been a regular participant in the YGF, for several years presenting sections of a piece titled “In Pelog,” which like Terry Riley’s groundbreaking minimalist composition “In C” has players move through a sequence of short phrases, repeating one an undetermined number of times before moving on to the next. In the case of “In Pelog,” the phrases were taken from the balungan of the popular gamelan piece gendhing “Onang-Onang,” and played on balungan instruments.
three women in matching yellow blouses and batik skirts swaying and singing at microphones like backup singers in a pop group. In 2005, a group from a Christian high school presented something like a morality play, beginning with a sermon, which in one section had a pulsing *kempul* like a bass line, anchoring harmonic changes every four or eight beats, accompanying a chorus of male voices singing a catchy diatonic melody, with a group of *saron* providing a short repeating riff, all of which stylistically most closely resembled 1980s synth pop.

What there has been rather little of at the YGF is traditional Javanese karawitan. Perlman, writing about the 1997 event in which he participated as a member of the ensemble of American gamelan enthusiasts that rehearses at the Indonesian consulate in New York, noted that “aside from some curtain-raisers performed by children . . . the only completely traditional performance in the festival is our own” (Perlman 1999: 2). At the 2005 festival, the closest thing to a traditional performance was by a student group from Universitas Gadjah Mada. The group was joined by Djoko Walujo, Wasitodipuro’s successor at the California Institute of the Arts, playing *rebab*, a leading instrument in traditional settings that in this instance was largely drowned out by an oversized chorus of eleven male and seventeen female singers.

Perlman aptly summed up the YGF as “more a celebration of musical syncretism and experimentation than of tradition” (ibid.). Sapto Raharjo declared “Gamelan is a spirit, not an object . . . the instruments are just the medium” (Raharjo, quoted in Diamond 1997: 92). He may have made this statement in response to, or anticipation of, criticism of the festival’s lack of focus, but it also seems to accord with his rather expansive vision of gamelan’s contemporary existence.

Sapto’s vision was, however, deliberately alternative. Also absent from the YGF were
groups that played campursari or other styles that had achieved such widespread popularity in the 1990s (chapter 2). When I asked Michael Asmara about the lack of participation of “very classical” and “very pop” groups, he explained that it was “because of the system.” Groups were not invited to perform, but rather they asked the festival to take part (Michael Asmara, p.c., 13 August 2005). It was this, as much as the blurring of the “boundaries of gamelan,” that bothered I Wayan Sadra, who objected to how the openness of the YGF to “beginners” compromised the legitimacy of the event. As much as gamelan players, he was referring to composers, arguing that many of those who come—he said “I don’t need to mention names,” but then off the record spoke about a number of participants from Japan who “can’t play any instruments”—have “just started studying.” “In their own countries they’re nobody,” but at the YGF “they become composers.” His point was “not whether its good or not” but rather the “attitude,” the lack of “respect” for the forum. “It's like a family performance,” adding as clarification “Just play, we'll just watch. Not professional. Not for prestige. And the legitimation isn't there” (I Wayan Sadra, p.c., 04 August 2005). Sadra had taken his own populist turn with the Sono Seni Ensemble, opening the ensemble to a ragtag group of young musicians, but the YGF proved to be a bit too inclusive.

The YGF effectively operates on an open mic principle, implemented on a larger scale and with the requisite organization. The core festival staff secures the venues—which change from year to year—and funding to cover production and publicity. Accommodation and some assistance with local travel is provided to some foreign participants. Otherwise, there is little in the way of financial expenditure, or income. Performers are not paid artist fees, and the audience is not charged admission. The YGF attracts volunteers not through the incentive of free tickets, but through the excitement that has been generated around the event—and
perhaps a free t-shirt. The cover photo of the YGF’s Facebook page is a montage of photos, mostly of groups in matching yellow-green shirts; superimposed on a blurry photo of someone pointing straight at the camera is the caption, in English, “The next Volunteer of Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival could be You!”

Like most open mic events and other activities based on voluntary participation, those who get involved self-select. While decisions to participate are made individually, there are other factors shape the overall patterns of participation. Starting with the second YCMF, Michael Asmara instituted “practical guidelines” limiting groups to a maximum of five performers, and their presentations to ten minutes, precisely because this would rule out bands that would play a set, as are common at the YGF (Michael Asmara, p.c., 13 August 2005). The YGF has no specific guidelines of that sort, but the structure and character of the festival is no less effective in determining the kinds of musicians that seek to participate, and those that do not. Campursari groups, whether already or seeking to become successful, have no need and are not interested in performance opportunities that do not pay. The format, social milieu, and aesthetic profile of the YGF similarly offer little to those who relate to what used to be the mainstream practice of Javanese gamelan prior to campursari’s rise. For both professionals and amateurs with that orientation, outside of paying or other specific types of formal engagements such as competitions, it is a non-presentational mode of participatory music making—epitomized by informal gatherings (klenengan) and practices (latihan) that are focused entirely on traditional repertoire, and that proceed not like a variety show but according to a distinct musical and social logic—that best serves their interests.63

63. See Turino (2008) on the distinction between the peresentational and the participatory. Klenengan and latihan are much longer, and more loosely scheduled, than concert presentations. Non-listening
The participants the YGF attracts are quite diverse in terms of their aesthetic inclinations, but less so demographically, with most being better educated, middle class, relatively young, and living in urban centers. They overlap not with gamelan’s current and past mainstreams, but rather with the audience Sapto was engaged in surveying as chief of research and development at Geronimo. In that capacity, Sapto oversaw the team whose charge was to “carry out audience demographic data collection and analysis” to “determine audience listening tastes” and develop “time-slotted, targeted broadcasting programs which consist mostly of Western and Indonesian pop music” (Burchman 2000: 102).

Recontextualizing Musik Kontemperor

To be sure, Sapto’s own artistic priorities are distinct from those of the commercial radio station at which he worked. In the process of overseeing the YGF, Sapto helped form “a community” that was to be the subject of the third book in his trilogy, on “arts management” (Raharjo 2005: viii, 154). It took the name “Gayam 16,” after the address of the “music gallery” just a few doors down from Geronimo’s building that a former head of the “Geronimo Listener Club” helped Sapto found. Besides acting as headquarters for the YGF, Gayam 16 was intended to support the “growth of music groups” that identify as “indie-label . . . in the midst of the ‘major label’ music industry that in general is dominated by music conglomerates with mainstream genres, whether rock, pop, or other mainstreams” (Raharjo

Participants may or may not be present, but if present they constitute onlookers rather than an audience that the playing participants perform for. The assignment of players to instruments is typically not set in advance, but is instead negotiated, mostly indirectly through action rather than through direct discussion, with attention to the relative status of those who show up. Repertoire may be decided in advance, but more typically is subject to a similar negotiation. In either case, the pieces and the order in which they are played follow musical conventions. For more on the musical practice of Javanese gamelan on this level, see Marc Benamou’s incisive survey of “The Musical Scene in Solo” (2010: 3-39).
Sapto thus also draws a clear distinction between the kind of music that he is concerned with supporting and that produced and distributed by industri. But his notion of an alternative is rather different than that of the Pekan Komponis, which even in 2005 was equating “popular music” and “industri.” Sapto had a genuine interest in both experimentalism and the traditional, and worked to promote them through the unlikely medium of a radio station primarily focused on “mainstream” pop. In 1995, for example, he received a career development grant from the Ford Foundation to support his work in developing radio broadcasts of “Indonesian ethnic music” (Burchman 2000: 102). But these commitments did not lead Sapto to close himself off from industri in the broader sense as a potent aesthetic force, and they certainly didn’t get in the way of taking advantage of the resources he was able to access through working for one of its channels.

Those “indie-label” groups that in one way or another engaged with the “spirit” of gamelan make up one of the core constituencies served by the YGF. Another is composers of musik kontemporer who similarly had some relationship to gamelan through their work. A third is musicians from abroad, some of whom would be identified with new music or contemporary art music, while others might be more readily associated with the more recent and even more nebulous category of world music. The primary points of aesthetic reference of these different constituencies may differ, but fundamentally they had in common a certain creative inclination: a tendency toward, in Perlman’s terms, “syncretism and experimentation”—though not necessarily experimentalism. That which is unambiguously musik kontemporer has maintained a significant place in the YGF, even as the festival has diversified—or as Sapto put it, expanded to “a higher level.” But it has not been privileged.

The YGF has thus posed a challenge to the order that had established musik kontemporer.
Sharing the stage with other forms of creative experimentation, which is part of that challenge, can also be understood as the manifestation of a more fundamental realignment. Dispensing with the meritocratic approach to curation exemplified by Suka Hardjana and the Pekan Komponis Muda, the YGF is messily democratic. Anyone who wants to participate can, with no prerequisites, no limitations based on genre, no insistence on any particular form of innovation—and not even any clear definition of what it means to embody the “spirit” of gamelan.

Hardjana did, in speaking about the PKM in 2004, stress that it was “a forum which we made extremely open.” He did not select “only certain genres of music,” but was open to participants with backgrounds in “any kind of music . . . from Western classical, Eastern classical, gamelan, jazz, popular music, dangdut, whatever” (Suka Hardjana, p.c., 14 September 2004). This was at least somewhat evident at the 1998 Pekan Komponis, the first after a ten year hiatus, with the participation of Fahmi Alattas—who while continuing to explore a fascination with microtonalities gained from his studies with Slamet Abdul Sjukur makes money composing for television programs—and especially Didi AGP, whose primary involvement is jazz and pop (chapter 6). But the extending of the original openness, an openness to not only those engaged with Western models of new music but also those with a foundation in traditional Indonesian musics, to an openness to those involved with jazz and other more mainstream forms of “modern music” (so far, in the sporadic attempts to continue the Pekan Komponis there has yet to be a dangdut musician) is a more recent turn that parallels the populism represented more emphatically by the YGF. Hardjana also stressed that the different musics in which Pekan Komponis participants had their foundations “could only be sources.” “They certainly couldn’t make pop, or classical music.” The Pekan Komponis
was “a forum of new music,” and so while participants “were allowed to depart from any source” the pieces they made “had to be new—totally a new one” (Suka Hardjana, p.c., 14 September 2004).

The YGF made no such demands. It was, as Sadra put it, “a festival without curatorship.” It was not, however, without direction. Relatively speaking, Sapto steered the YGF with a light hand. He did not act as an arbiter, nor did he attempt to guide participants toward certain concepts or aesthetics, as Hardjana did with the composers who created works for the PKM (chapter 5). He did not double as critic, though he did, during set changes, conduct post-performance interviews with representatives from the groups that played, and he framed those groups in introducing them in his role as MC. In that role he was very much the key personality associated with the YGF, like the host of a radio or television program, though he was more than just the voice and face that read scripts produced by others. Sapto involved himself intensively in all levels of organization. The YGF was very much his pet project, and it embodied the vision of a creative musician whose aesthetic affinities were multiple.

Growing out of events that Sapto had effectively curated—the 1993 concert featuring Wasitodipuro’s *Jaya Manggala Gita* along with works involving both gamelan and computers, and the 1994 Festival of “Komposisi Gamelan Kontemporer”—the YGF continued to feature forms of creativity that were not bound by the conventions of established genres and idioms. But it did so in a way that was absolutely non-dogmatic. It has remained open to the kind of conspicuously experimentalist work that at least used to be evoked by the term *musik kontemporer*, and work that is otherwise self-consciously artistic, but it does not insist that participants conform to such ideals. Nor has it tried to convince those who are “too serious” to learn from *industri*, as Djaduk did with his friends from ASKI Solo. It by no
means features the full range of contemporary forms of expression involving gamelan, but its scope is significantly broader than that of its 1994 precedent. It is, effectively, a festival of contemporary music, in a broader sense of the term, that relates, at times tenuously, to gamelan. But Sapto, who in the early 1990s was happy to be identified as an avant-garde composer, deliberately did not use the term kontemporer for the YGF—a choice that was the background to his jokingly overblown praise for Michael Asmara’s boldness in calling his own festival the Yogyakarta Contemporary Music Festival, in comments Sapto made before presenting his jingle-length MIDI-sequenced fanfare at the first YCMF in 2004.

The most significant aspect of the YGF’s challenge to musik kontemporer is that it denies its claims to distinctiveness. It hastens the blurring of boundaries that was the source of the anxiety manifest in the growing debate in the late 1990s over what is and what is not musik kontemporer. The YGF has remained effectively neutral on this question, refusing to take sides. Nevertheless, it remains one of the more significant forums for those who do identify with musik kontemporer. Some have had misgivings, like Sadra, who felt that he had “already played” at the festival “too often,” and was now “tired” of it (I Wayan Sadra, p.c., 04 August 2005). Others, like Michael Asmara, have presented pieces nearly every year. Well established figures might treat it casually, as the prize-winning Balinese composer Yudane did in 2005 when he played a duet on a single saron with the New Zealand composer Gareth Farr, while younger musicians give it their all, as with Kelompok Los, an ensemble of students from STSI (ASKI) Solo that presented two meticulously composed and rehearsed pieces at the 2004 festival. For the most part, pieces are well received by an appreciative and relatively sizable audience, though more dynamic pieces that demonstrate technical skill tend to garner a more enthusiastic response than those that are more austere. In either case, the
YGF puts the ideas of composers into wider circulation. It thus offers opportunity, as the same time as it challenges. On balance, most seem to think this is worth the tradeoff.

Iwan Hassan: Finding Refuge from the Commercialism of Art

Frustrated with Art

A particularly ironic case of how the art/pop dynamic has played out in and around musik kontemporer—one that shows quite starkly how realms of music generally associated with the ideals of Art are, in Indonesia, bound up in commerce and mainstream populism—is that of Iwan Hasan. A younger composer, born in 1967, Hasan grew up in Jakarta. Like many other Western-oriented composers, his primary instrument is guitar, which he first studied through Yamaha music classes, and then pursued more seriously as an undergraduate studying music and economics at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. His major in music was classical guitar, but he also studied jazz piano and composition.

Upon his return to Indonesia, Hasan wanted to be “a classical performer and composer” and to play “traditional mainstream jazz.” I clarified that by that he meant standards, and asked if there was a bit of a scene in Jakarta. “Not really,” he answered. There were only a few lounges that had jazz, and other than that a few opportunities to “play weddings, and that kind of thing,” so he quickly grew frustrated. He was also frustrated trying to play chamber music in “the real serious direction,” as opposed to “playing light classical music in hotels, and restaurants . . . just playing for the money.” His attempts to form “a serious chamber music group” failed because “there was no money.” With other players prioritizing their

64. All quotations in this section are taken from an interview with Hasan in 2005.
paying gigs, “no one was really serious establishing themselves as a music performer in a real manner”—Hasan’s sense of “real” having, evidently, more to do with his studies in the USA than with the reality of making a living as a musician in Jakarta.

Hasan got “more and more” into his “composition side,” but there too his ambitions were thwarted. In 1993, after hearing one of Hasan’s chamber music compositions, Yazeed Djamin, then director of the Nusantara Chamber Orchestra, invited him to arrange it for orchestra. Hasan did so, and paid someone in the orchestra to copy parts—he had not yet learned to prepare scores using notation software. But the board of the orchestra, for reasons Hasan did not convey, did not approve its performance, and the piece went unplayed.

Hasan “stopped doing music altogether” for about two years. He got back into music in 1995, when Franki Raden asked him to conduct his Opera Merah Putih, a large scale work composed for the fifth anniversary of SCTV.65 A few years later, Hasan was invited to participate in the 1998 Pekan Komponis on Raden’s recommendation. The pieces he presented—which, as he pointed out, were the only ones at that year’s festival written “note for note,” and which he reportedly composed within the space of three weeks—earned him a lukewarm review from Suka Hardjana, who commented that Hasan “seemed intent on reporting the results of his studies to date, especially in America” (Hardjana 1998a, in 2004b).

Turning to Rock

Meanwhile, Hasan had found a vehicle that was better able to accommodate his creative

65. SCTV, Surya Citra Televisi, Indonesia’s second private television station, was founded in 1990. An excerpt from Raden’s piece can be viewed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i07p5iLJnVY, accessed 19 September 2011.
energy. In 1995, he decided to start a band with a clarinetist he had met while working with Raden, who shared an interest in creating original music rather than just gigging for money. They wanted to create their “own kind of music.” What they formed was a progressive rock group, called Discus. The eight members on the group’s second album, . . . tot Licht!, played a wide array of instruments: various wind instruments, including Balinese, Sundanese, and Torajan suling; violin; classical guitar and a 21-string harp guitar that Hasan had learned to play while in Oregon; a smattering of pitched and unpitched percussion, most of it Balinese; and the usual complement of electric guitar, bass, keyboards, and drums. All of the members sang, six of them credited with “lead vocals.” This allowed them to cover similarly diverse ground stylistically. Within the 9 minutes and 20 seconds of the album’s first track, “System Manipulation,” they shift between an opening texture of interlocking hand clapping underlying a pentatonic melody sung by one of the male members; a melodically and rhythmically angular Frank Zappa-esque instrumental section that starts out with hocketing between unison accents played by drums, bass, and guitar, and chords and short figures on organ, violin, and clarinet, in additive groupings of a steady pulse that defies identification of meter; a vaguely ethnic section with alternating gongs, a repeated rhythmic pattern on a cowbell, and a chorus of suling; a section with heavy-metal-style low register heavily distorted electric guitar, the drummer keeping a steady backbeat on the bass and snare drums and an open hi-hat, and a speaking/growling male vocalist; and a section in a light jazz fusion style, with a nimble, bouncing bass line and swung ride cymbal underlying a female singer alternating with sprightly melodic interjections played in unison by an undistorted electric guitar and clarinet.

At first Discus experienced some difficulty figuring out where they fit in the Indonesian
music scene. Rock festivals “didn’t want us, because we were strange.” Jazz festivals “would let us play, but the audience didn’t like it.” Then, a group of fans of progressive rock founded the “Indonesian Progressive Society.” Discus’s second album was released in 2003 on a new Indonesian label that was created by the multinational music giant Sony in response to the society’s lobbying efforts, greatly improving its distribution. Discus was declared the Best Progressive Band at the 2004 Anugerah Musik Indonesia, the Indonesian equivalent of The Grammy Awards. They have garnered some international attention as well. In 2000, a year after they released their first album, they were invited to a “progressive music festival” in the United States, after which they did a brief tour that ended with an appearance at the Knitting Factory, a key venue in New York City’s downtown scene. Their second album is discussed on several websites run by fans of progressive rock, and a Japanese group took considerable trouble to perform a quite faithful cover of Hasan’s “System Manipulation,” the song described above.  

Hasan had played in rock bands previously, while in high school, but he had “left rock music almost completely for ten or more years” while focusing “fully” on “classical and jazz standards” during his studies in Oregon. He “didn’t intentionally leave rock music,” but was, nevertheless, led away from it by his program. That program exposed him to the canon of contemporary art music—he mentioned “Pierre Boulez,” “John Cage,” and “Minimalism” when we discussed his understanding of the term musik kontemporer at the outset of our interview. But it didn’t indoctrinate him into any particular creed of modernism. What he did

66. The CD insert includes three logos, of PRS Records, Indonesian Progressive Society, and Intrepid Music. Copyright is held by Intrepid Music, while PT Sony Music Entertainment Indonesia is credited with manufacturing and distribution.
develop was a commitment to the “academic sort of way to compose,” to composing “note for note.” In Indonesia, the Pekan Komponis, musik kontemporer’s foremost institution, provided him with one opportunity to present his work. But overall, because of the “circumstances” in Indonesia, he “went back into” rock. He still hoped that someday he might again “write chamber and orchestral music.” But for the moment, his band Discus was what appeared to him to be “the only way I can I play the music that I like.” It was progressive rock, a highly specialized and newly-opened-up niche within the realm of industri, rather than “classical” or jazz—which in Indonesia are even more bound up with aesthetic expectations conditioned by the dominance of industri—that has allowed Hasan to most fully exercise his artistic integrity.

**Yasudah: Mixophony as an Idiosyncratic Middle Way**

*Finding a Path and Following It Home*

An especially poetic case, both in terms of his story and how he articulates his engagement with the popular, is that of a musician who goes by the name Yasudah. Presumably a pseudonym—*ya sudah* means “yes already,” which in Indonesian, a language without tense, is an extremely common phrase—Yasudah uses the name exclusively, and is referred to that way consistently. Yasudah was born and grew up, and now lives, in Baluwarti, the

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68. Except where noted otherwise, all quotations in this section are taken from conversations with Yasudah in 2004 and 2005.
69. The cover of his cassette release “Di-et? No!” lists his name as “S. Yasudah.” It also credits production to “Yawis & Co,” the producer as “Mr. Nggihsampun” (“ya wis” and “nggih sampun” are “ya sudah” in low and high Javanese, respectively), and the distributor as “Mr. Yesalright.” As well as a factual response, “*ya sudah*” and its Javanese equivalents are used like “OK,” as an exclamation to express a range of different moods. Out of respect for the integrity of his persona, I decided not to ask
neighborhood within the outer walls of the Kraton Surakarta, the main palace in Solo, that traditionally housed both aristocrats and palace retainers.

Despite growing up in the immediate environs of a major epicenter of high Javanese culture, Yasudah had no direct involvement in gamelan. He described a hesitation to play, even when opportunities presented themselves, as the result of a distance he felt because he didn’t fully understand it. He was, however, a serious fan (penggemar berat) of radio broadcasts of *wayang orang*, listening to the broadcasts on RRI every Wednesday evening. He preferred *wayang orang* to *wayang kulit* because it was “more complete,” with the troupe of performers better able than a single dhalang to convey different characters through the distinct timbres of their voices and their ways of speaking.

By his own account, Yasudah’s involvement in music “came late.” Though he listened to rock bands such as The Beatles and Deep Purple while in high school, he only started playing in bands after he graduated. His interest was strong enough, however, that he visited the campus of ASKI, which at the time was just a few blocks away from his house, and also that of AMI Jogja, as possible places to study music. During both visits, he asked himself “could I go to school here?”, but described feeling as if his mouth was “locked shut.” It was only after he moved to Jakarta in the late 1970s, to look for work, that he discovered an atmosphere in which he felt more at ease. He went to TIM (the Taman Ismail Marzuki arts center) and happened upon a festival. Then he visited the campus of IKJ, and encountered the scene that had developed around Slamet Abdul Sjukur (chapter 3). He described seeing the “listening room”—the collection of recordings and playback equipment assembled by Tony Prabowo, Otto Sidharta, and others—with “many cassettes, classical, kontemporer, etnik, whatever.”

Yasudah what his legal name was.
This provided much stimulation—“maybe too much,” he reflected, as exposure to so much music was too “intense” as a “jump” from “nothing at all.” What made the biggest difference was Sjukur’s teaching style, and his rejection of conventional hierarchical relationships. Yasudah finally felt like he “could ask and answer freely, without any burden,” because of a “dialectic connection” that was lacking in other places. At ASKI, Yasudah attributed this lack to the “existence of the kraton,” and the idea that only once one was “old” could one talk. At IKJ, he felt “that even as a newcomer I could talk freely. Everyone could talk freely until discovering the route of their choice.”

The route that Yasudah ended up following was somewhat circuitous, shaped by discontinuities that were the result of further periods of hesitation and doubt. He delayed enrolling at IKJ until 1980, at first because he arrived in Jakarta after classes had started, and then because he felt “confused.” After leaving IKJ—like almost everyone else in the composition scene without having graduated—he “retreated completely” (mundur total) for six years, between 1987 and 1993. When he reemerged, it was first through a symposium on metaphysics that he organized at Oncor, an artistic community and “venue for experimental arts activities,” managed by Tony Prabowo and his colleague from IKJ, Arjuna, that formed after TIM had, as Franki Raden put it, “lost its aura as the center for contemporary arts” (Notosudirdjo 2001: 383). It was only after he moved back to Solo, just after the symposium, that he started making music again.

IKJ had provided Yasudah with an “orientation.” Before starting at IKJ he was looking for “a form to hold on to,” but what he wanted was “to enter music, as a way of life.” “Maybe this was what inspired me to go the route of musik kontemporer,” he reflected. His studies helped him realize that “what was needed was exploration, not submitting to existing genres.”
He was “made aware” that “it wasn’t a form that I needed to find actually, but an existence behind that form.”

Yasudah very readily embraced a philosophy central to *musik kontemporer*, but he felt less affinity with those aspects of *musik kontemporer* that were themselves genre-like, foremost among them the high modernist style that Tony Prabowo and Michael Asmara found so compelling. While at IKJ he wrote a number of through-composed, fully notated pieces, but looking back he describes them as “introductory level compositions.” He realized he was less interested in pieces that were “written . . . descriptive and strict, already fully formed [*langsung matang*], total,” though he also experienced a bias, in himself as much as around him, against pieces that weren’t fully composed. “What is this exploration? An unfinished work, and you’re presenting it?”

Nevertheless, it was this more exploratory approach, in the vein of the workshops that Sjukur conducted on making music from readily available objects, that Yasudah gravitated toward. He recounted how while at IKJ he would do performances where he “didn’t bring anything,” instead using “whatever I could find at the performance space.” Working with a theater group in Jakarta, he “made an installation” with “empty bottles” and other random objects, and played that. Some of his first efforts after moving to Solo were also in this vein. For the Nur Gora Rupa festival in 1994 he organized a piece titled “Karnival Sepeda Bunyi” that involved a large group, consisting mostly of school kids, riding and making sounds with bicycles. In 1996 he gave an evening-length presentation—also at Taman Budaya Surakarta, the arts center that was the venue for Nur Gora Rupa—which he played solo, and then with his wife, Susana Miranti Kröber, originally from Germany, on a number of sound sculptures, mostly made from springs attached to various sized tin cans.
Reconciling Musical Habits through Philosophy

In 2000, Yasudah began integrating his explorations of sound producing materials with a mode of music making that was, at least for him and the people he worked with, more in tune with the environment they had grown up in, and that he had returned to. This was an environment where every day one heard the “slendro/pelog of gamelan” and the “pop/rock of industri,” as well as “buskers on the street, playing guitar,” but that was “without classic or kontemporer.” For an event at Taman Budaya Surakarta commemorating Martopangrawit—the court musician turned key teacher and mentor (chapter 2)—he formed a band with two people that he had worked with since 1995 and some students from ASKI. The following year, hearing of their plans to perform at the Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival, a friend from IKJ asked what kind of gamelan they were going to play. Their instrumentation did not include gamelan, but rather Yasudah’s sound sculptures, multiple singers, and an “ancient and simple” keyboard that Yasudah named “Kanjeng Kyai Kothak Jedhung” (His Venerable Highness Green Caterpillar Box). Punning on the word gamelan, his friend said “damelan” (Javanese, “activity”), which led to them coming up with the name Sareng Damelan—meaning, roughly, Nest of Activity.

Yasudah and Sareng Damelan’s first cassette was a self-produced release titled DI-ET? NO! that jokingly credited production to “Ywis & Co,” the producer as “Mr. Nggihsampun” (ya wis and nggih sampun = ya sudah in low and high Javanese, respectively), and the distributor as “Mr. Yesalright.” Most of the album’s ten tracks are essentially songs, featuring relatively straightforward and catchy melodies, often in diatonic approximations of slendro or pelog. The arrangements, however, are never completely straightforward, though there are abundant references to popular idioms and—thanks to the stock patches on Yasudah’s
keyboard, which imitate slap bass, drum kit, timpani, assorted Latin percussion, and an array of “ethnic” instruments—to the sound of certain late 1980s pop. To take one example: “Republik Plèsètan” (republic of puns, which describes well the group’s playful use of language, mostly Javanese, but with some Indonesian and a couple of English words) begins with the whole group chanting in vigorous rhythmic unison, the two women on clear pitches a major sixth apart and the men speaking. The text of what they chant, and the rhythm they chant it in, reappear in the guise of the syncopated minor/pentatonic melody of the chorus, set against a medium tempo funk vamp. Before it, against the same funk vamp in the relative major, the verse features a quasi-pelog melody reminiscent of langgam sung by one of the female members, with spoken or half-spoken interjections by the male members. The rhythmic continuity is interrupted, first in the verse by an andhegan-like pause filled mostly with dialogue against a background of soft wooshing noises. Then, following the chorus and what at first seems like a bridge, the rhythm parts fade out, taken over by a diffuse texture with one of the female singers repeating a short phrase, quietly and in a low register; dialogue and muttering involving the rest of the members; and more whooshing noises. The rhythm parts sneak back in, with a melodic embellishment played in reverse, like the guitar solo in The Beatles’ “I’m Only Sleeping.” The verses and chorus are repeated, the chorus this time ending with a more definitive rhythmic cadence as the ensemble shifts into the same diffuse texture as before.

**DI-ET? NO!** is an example of a “blend of various musical styles & contexts” that Yasudah has variously termed “mixo-context” or “mixophony,” one of five categories in a seemingly ongoing attempt to comprehensively categorize “contexts of musical projects,” or more broadly, “contexts of sonic phenomenon,” as he put it in one of our interviews from...
2004. The first context, “chaostophony,” refers to “everyday sound phenomenon that happen without the intention of a musical consciousness.” In the fifth context, “cosmophony,” “there is no sound”; in explaining it, Yasudah instead spoke of the intervals between planets. In between are more specifically musical contexts. Yasudah offered “beatophony” as the context adopted “when a person begins to study music,” though beyond “a beat, a rhythm that is repeated, as a constant,” it also referred to the use of “scales—major or minor diatonic, pentatonic slendro/pelog.” “Explorophony” is the “realm of explorers,” who as Yasudah observed,

   tend not to be satisfied playing music tied to certain patterns, and a metronomic, too constant, monotone. So they carry out explorations for sound phenomenon as broadly as possible . . . making their own scales. If necessary, they draw material from chaostophony, as a source of inspiration.

“Explorophony” aptly denotes the context most typical of musik kontemporer, the context that Yasudah encountered at IKJ and that he credits with inspiring him to “open” himself “as widely as possible.” “Mixophony,” then, is about “how to make combinations,” drawing primarily upon “beatophony” and “explorophony.”

Yasudah’s theorizing goes beyond narrowly musical concerns. In the succinct account of categories included in the insert of Yasudah and Sareng Damelan’s second self-produced album—an album of “Ethno Rox-pop” songs, mostly composed in 2002, that was their foray into what he there termed “Beato-context”—Yasduah glosses “Cosmo-context” as “Music for the Soul Evolution.” When I spoke with Yasudah in 2005, he had replaced “phony” with “kronos,” and his philosophizing had turned to the various “typologies of time” connected to “the evolution of a person’s spirit.” In this scheme, the five terms were “kronos-chaos”; “kronos-metros”; “kronos-bisnos,” the time it takes to complete actions; “kronos-psikos,” a
phase that with its danger of, as he put it, “psikodilematik” or even “psikotrajik,” that one must work through; until reaching “kronos-sukmanos” (sukma = “soul” in Javanese). More recently, Yasudah has offered workshops in Germany on “a new approach to experience self-structure” in which he “encourages the group to find eight self aspects in between different horizons e.g. horizon of knowledge, understanding, 5-senses.”

Whether having to do with the specifically musical or the spiritual, the underlying motivation for Yasudah’s theorizing is personal. It has to do, most of all, with Yasudah’s quest to find a life in, if not necessarily a livelihood from, music. Recognizing that “music without text”—that is, instrumental music—“needs a high level of interest,” Yasudah spoke of using text, and drawing upon the “storehouse” of “rock/pop,” as a way “to fish for interest from broad society.” He acknowledged that “explorophony” would be “heavy” to the ears of “general society, regular society” (masyarakat umum, masyarakat awam). He displays something, then, of the concern with accessibility at the center of Djaduk Ferianto’s kind of populism. He did not, however, speak of himself and the members of Sareng Damelan as “professional artists,” and has made only modest attempts to break into the world of industri. Yasudah’s engagement with elements from the context of “beatophony,” and his efforts to integrate them and those from “explorophony” into what he calls “mixophony,” appear more fundamentally to be an attempt to reconcile conflicting musical interests. When I asked him when these efforts started, he began by explaining that “before IKJ, I only played

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71. Yasudah did send me a text message in 2005 about going with Sareng Damelan to play at an event in Bandung, which he described as “an effort [to present] Etnik-kontemporer in the arena of Rock Bands” (upaya Etnk-kntmpr pd ajang RockBand) (Yasudah, p.c. via text message, 1 August 2005). Most likely, the specific “arena” was that of the underground or indie scenes, described by Wallach (2008b) and Luvaas (2009).
regular band [music].” He “did not reject that musical habit,” but did become “anxious” (penasaran) to learn. “Is it this, or can be however, or . . .” But he found the never-ending polemic surrounding musik kontemporer, and the obsession with the question “how does one compose twenty-first century music?”, troublesome. He found himself getting caught up in it, until he developed his concept of “five-contexts” (panca-konteks) as a frame for understanding music. Rather than getting “stressed,” as others did, “trying to come up with a perfect conclusion,” Yasudah was able to “feel calm facing the variety of music I see on the face of the earth.” He escaped what he called the “sectoral fanaticism” that argued for the superiority of one kind of music over another.

In life, as in music, Yasudah argued, “an attitude has to be taken, and carried out.” Yasudah chose not to enter a life in music by defining himself according to a given tradition.

I’m a rock musician, for example, that means—or I’m a classical musician, or I’m a kontemporer musician. Even that I’m not. This is music. If I play music, I want to study to carry out this life. Music is learning . . . Experiencing this, playing music, what are the hidden connections to life?

But as much as it transcends musik kontemporer, Yasudah’s rejection of musical pigeonholes has, in his case, grown out of it. It was his studies with Slamet Abdul Sjukur at IKJ that first opened his mind, and it was there that his experimentalist inclinations were legitimized. While studying at IKJ he did not reject the “musical habit” of playing in “regular” bands, but neither has he returned to playing in regular bands. His brand of populism is, instead, highly idiosyncratic, with the indelible mark of the other musical habit he developed, at IKJ, of “explorophony.” His interest in “beatophony” is less about breaking into any mainstream, and more about remaining true to his whole musical self.
A Truly Alternative Populism: Beyond the Urban-Elite

Sojourns outside the Usual Circles

Not all of the populist venturings away from musik kontemporer’s centers of gravity have involved engaging with one or another aspect of popular culture, or the realm of industri which is responsible for its ubiquity. A different direction steers well clear of the whole urban-elite realm, one in which musik kontemporer first established a niche, but that is dominated by pop and industri.

An example is a different project undertaken by Yasudah, which I found out about when he sent me a text message letting me know it was about to be profiled on MetroTV (Yasudah, p.c. via text message, 25 June 2005). Fortunately, there was a television at the friend’s house where I was staying, and I was able to tune in. The project, called “Suara Serumpun Bambu” (Sound of a Single Clump of Bamboo) was a collaboration between Yasudah, Sareng Damelan, and a few other urban artists, with residents of Berjo, a village near Telaga Madirda, a small spring-fed lake on the slopes of Mount Lawu, the imposing volcano that lies to the east of Solo. The Kabupaten of Karanganyar, the administrative district where the village is located, sponsored the project in the interest of developing tourism in the area.

The project took the form of a quasi-ritualistic performance event in multiple parts. In one, the performers, in costumes with elaborate headdresses made of bamboo, were stationed or moved around part of the lake, with a few on a bamboo raft, singing and playing bamboo

73. The number of tourists visiting Java are a fraction of those visiting Bali, and they are most concentrated in Jogja. Karanganyar, on the opposite side of Solo from Jogja, is quite far off the established tourist circuit.
instruments. In another section, they performed an arrangement of “Matur Nuwun,” the opening track from Yasudah and Sareng Damelan’s DI-ET? NO!, with the performers standing and moving in concentric circles. The middle circle was a group of women keeping time by gently tossing and catching soybeans with a tampah, a winnowing tray.

Some of the local musicians in the project were members of Keluarga Thek-Thek Mekar Sari, a group that built upon the music used during night watches, adding additional instruments, most of them also made of bamboo, to accompany songs. As Yasudah put it, they sang “hundreds of songs,” but the accompaniment was invariably the same. He recounted how the workshops he conducted with them and others “to explore other possibilities” had mixed success. One day “they would get something,” but the next they would have trouble recreating that “atmosphere,” and would return to “thek-thek,” the interlocking rhythms on their bamboo instruments, and singing. The project was interesting, but as Yasudah’s wife Susana put it, articulating a perspective they seemed to share, the Keluarga Thek-Thek Mekar Sari members were “so tied to their habits.”

Yasudah’s project at Telaga Madirda is one of several examples of kontemporer artists from urban centers working with those at sometimes significant remove from their usual social circles. One of the earliest instances was the kecak production that Sardono developed in Teges, Bali, in 1972 (chapter 4). Going further afield, in 1978 Sardono led a study group from IKJ—of which Franki Raden was a member (Hardjana 1986: 85)— to Tanjungmanis, a village in East Kalimantan where the Tauw clan of the Kenyah people had resettled. Sardono returned there in 1982 to retrace part of the route they had taken from their original home in highlands of the interior of the island, and in 1987 organized a nine-day event at the Taman Ismail Marzuki arts center to draw attention to the ecological disaster of the forest fires that
engulfed the land surrounding Tanjungmanis. The event included Sardono’s own multimedia piece *Hutan yang Merintah* (the lamenting forest) which involved eleven dancers from Kalimantan, and included an electroacoustic composition by Tony Prabowo which used as source material recordings of the Kenyah performers (Murgiyanto 1991: 322-337). Sardono has also collaborated with Asmat and Dani people from West Papua, the latter one of those ethnic groups that, in a particularly egregious popular culture parallel to the temporal othering by anthropology critiqued by Johannes Fabian (Fabian 2002), is routinely described as a vestige of the stone age.74

In 1993, more than a decade before Yasudah’s project in Telaga Madirda, Slamet Abdul Sjukur undertook a project in a similar setting, working with residents of Trawas, a village in the mountains south of Surabaya in East Java. He was invited by the director of a local non-profit environmental education organization75 to “entertain the people in the village, for Earth Day.” Finding that idea ridiculous, Sjukur instead worked with them to “make music together,” leading them through exercises in starting from silence, and encouraging them to make their own instruments (Slamet Abdul Sjukur, p.c., 09 September 2004). As Sapto Raharjo recounted—presumably on the basis of viewing the profile of the project on RCTI TV—one of the results was a “composition” produced by attaching “sound producing


75. Pusat Pendidikan Lingkungan Hidup, literally “Living Space Education Center.” The organization’s website is (http://pplhselo.or.id, accessed 1 August 2013).
objects” to the nets with which the villagers would “often catch butterflies” (Sapto Raharjo, quoted in Burchman 2000: 111).

The urban/rural distinction is not necessarily the one that is most pertinent in these projects, nor is it invariably involved. When Sjukur told me about the project in Trawas, it was in conjunction with other instances in which, as he put it, he has made music “for people who have absolutely no musical background.” The first of these was the 1975 angklung project in Paris, which Sjukur carried out with members of the Indonesian community connected to the embassy (chapter 3). Sjukur also recounted creating a piece for a “newspaper salesperson” who could make “really great sounds,” who at the time Sjukur and I spoke was working “as a parking attendant in Blok M,” a large bargain shopping district in South Jakarta. On another occasion, Sjukur told me how he agreed to participate in the 2003 JakArt Festival only if they accepted his proposal to create a piece for one hundred Jakarta teenagers—or “ABG,” anak baru gede (newly big kids), as they were identified in the title of the piece—playing only bamboo kentongan (Slamet Abdul Sjukur, p.c., 20 August 2005).

Joseph Praba, one of Jack Body’s students at AMI Jogja, recounted his “automotive

76. From the traces it has left on the web, JakArt, which has a not so active Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/pages/JakArt-Festival, accessed 2 August 2013) with a link to a currently unavailable website (http://www.jakart.info), seems to be an ambitious but also alternative interdisciplinary arts festival. A PDF about the 2008 event summarizes the history of the festival, the first of which was held in 2001 (http://www.subudworldnews.com/newsAddons/SWN_en_JakArt.pdf, accessed 2 August 2013). With its frequent references to “Bapak” (Father), and the fact that it is stored on the website of Subud World News, suggests a connection to the international spiritual movement Subud, whose founder, Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, is referred to by the movement’s followers as “Bapak” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subud, accessed 2 August 2013).

77. Emma Baulch notes how musicians in the reggae, punk, and death metal scenes in Bali in the 1990s used ABG derisively to refer to young teenagers and their fickle, market influenced tastes (Baulch 2007: 22). Sjukur presumably did not intend to insult the youth whose creativity the piece, “100 ABG Babu” (babu = bahasa bambu, bamboo language), was, as the introductory notes to the score explain, intended to draw out.
music” project, a piece composed for a large number of motorized vehicles, mostly motorcycles, but also some cars, and a truck “with the muffler opened up” that was “used as bass.” The piece, which through a grant from the Swiss government was recorded and filmed at an airfield in Wonosari, a town southeast of Jogja, used graphic notation, with numbers from 0 to 10 to indicate gradations between idle and full throttle. Praba “conducted” using a traffic light. The piece was inspired by “the sound of motorcycles” and a concern with sound pollution, but sought more broadly to increase awareness of various kinds of pollution—not just sound, but also “gas pollution” and “social pollution.” To that end, he approached motorcycle gangs, the members of which, as he explained, were seeking only for society to acknowledge that they existed. The piece “offered them a way to receive applause, praise,” and reportedly had the effect of improving relations between different gangs (Joseph Praba, p.c., 11 August 2005).78

A Permanent Relocation: Sutanto “Mendut”

The figure who has demonstrated the most sustained commitment to working outside the established urban-elite-centered sphere of musik kontemporer is Sutanto. The most prominent of Jack Body’s students at AMI Jogja, representing the school with his “happening” at the first Pekan Komponis Muda in 1979, and that same year winning first prize in a composition competition held by the Jakarta Arts Council, Sutanto stopped composing and “vanished from the Indonesian music scene” (Notosudirdjo 2001: 349) after he was expelled for leading the

78. The piece, titled “Menjilat Lapisan Ozone” (Licking the Ozone Lazer), is listed on Praba’s website as a “Concert of Sound Art” (Konser Seni Bunyi) presented in Jogya, Solo, and Surabaya in 1992 (http://josephpraba.wordpress.com/about/, accessed 7 August 2013). The website makes no mention of the film, which I have not been able to track down. The audio recording he gave me seems to be an electroacoustic piece produced in a studio with recordings of individual motor vehicles.
protest against AMI’s elimination of contemporary music from its curriculum (chapter 3). When he reconnected with the kontemporer performing arts scene, it was from his base in Mendut, a small village near Borobudur, one of the world’s largest Buddhist monuments and a major tourist attraction. Sutanto had established a studio and gallery, with a focus on glass painting, which he also used as a base for his work encouraging villagers “to use theater as a medium for community development.” He also had the “aim to develop Mendut village to become a center for alternative world culture” (Sutanto, paraphrased in Notosudirdjo 2001:350).

Sutanto’s idea of alternative world culture incorporates aspects of the experimentalism he engaged in in the 1970s. This was most spectacularly evident in the piece he presented at the Nur Gora Rupa festival in 1994, a piece I was roped into through the American composer Nick Brooke, who contributed an electroacoustic element at Sutanto’s request. As he did for the first Pekan Komponis Muda, Sutanto orchestrated a “happening,” with most of the performers coming from Mendut. The various components of the piece, many of which were executed in parallel, independently of one another, ran the gamut from the refined to the rustic, the mundane to the outlandishly bizarre. There was one female dancer dancing the slow sinuous movements of the bedhaya/srimpi forms specific to the courts, in full costume. She provided a stark contrast to several long-haired and shirtless young men, who at times moved in ways that seemed to draw upon “folk” forms such as jathilan, and in one case the spastic movements of the demon Cakil, but more often simply leapt and thrashed about. They entered surreptitiously, hiding their tights under plain clothes, which they then

79. Cakil is a wiry, fanged demon in Javanese wayang, and dances derived from it, who is inevitably encountered and killed in the middle of each performance.
removed—two of them rather ceremoniously while standing on a chair, flinging articles of clothing and their shoes into the air. Further along in the forty-minute performance, the whole group of them engaged in more tossing of objects, this time tin cans. Seven performers, including three young men dressed in shorts, bright yellow t-shirts, and hard hats, formed a small chorus, following the grossly exaggerated conducting of an eighth performer. Filling out the troupe were about fifty school age kids, who for much of the piece did a line dance in a large circle around most of the other performers, and a flock of a dozen or so ducks who were shepherded around the stage toward the end. Members of the audience joined in, including Yasudah and participants of “Karnival Sepeda Bunyi” (see above), who rode their bicycles around the oversized pendhapa of Taman Budaya Surakarta in the opposite direction of the line of school kids. Adding to the chaotic atmosphere, a torrential rainstorm started part way through the piece, resulting in streams of water pouring off the edge of the roof—which, given the pendhapa’s open walls, were very clearly visible and audible. According to Franki Raden, and the video documentation I acquired from Taman Budaya Surakarta’s archives, the title of the piece was “Show Sexy,” but for my small part I was instructed to repeatedly say “so sexy,” as slowly and with as low a voice as possible, into a microphone. The idea was that this would sound like sukses (succession), a hot but somewhat taboo topic as President Suharto grew older, and his grip on power began to loosen.80

Ten years later, in 2004, when I went with Brooke to visit Sutanto in Mendut, I found that the scope of his work had expanded considerably. He took us to visit one of several communities in the area he had established a relationship with. Driving more than an hour,  

80. My account of the piece is based on my memory of the performance, and from reviewing video documentation obtained from TBS.
the last part on rough and very steep roads, he took us to the village of Gejayan, nearly 1000 meters up the slopes of Gunung Merbabu. On the way, he made some calls on his mobile phone to inform “his community,” as he spoke of them, that we were coming. When we arrived in Gejayan we were fed a meal in the home of the village head, after which we observed a rehearsal of the group Sutanto had been working with. Most of the fifty or so members of the group played teruntung, a small frame drum held in the left hand and struck with a long thin stick held in the right; a few played other small gongs and kendhang.

Sutanto’s role in shaping their performance seemed to be relatively minimal. He explained that traditionally there would be only a few musicians, accompanying a large group of dancers. His suggestion was simply to invert this, and create an “orke teruntung.” He gave a similar explanation in the spoken introduction to the public performance documented on a VCD he gave me—which had an ink-jet printed cover with the title Orkes Teruntung: Kolaborasi Sutanto (teruntung orchestra: collaboration [with or by] Sutanto)—noting how after they agreed to the idea, he asked them to “try playing them together—do you like it, or not?” After the performers were all seated in their places, but before they started, Sutanto improvised for about a minute on an upright piano. He played piano together with them later in their performance, but the teruntung players all but completely drowned him out.

For the most part, the group played what presumably they would usually play, only in a different configuration and, no less significantly, in a different context. They played not in their own village, but down the mountain on a stage erected in the small city of Magelang. It was not an enclosed theater, but a temporary stage, outdoors, in front of a temporary canopy over the audience, not unlike those that would be used for a wayang performance. The context did not preclude one of the performers apparently going into trance and collapsing,
requiring a few other performers and Sutanto to carry him out of the performance area while the music continued. Audience members were invited to participate by handing out *kentongan*, and at one point Sutanto stood on the edge of the stage clapping their beat to them, like a singer at a rock concert. And while a few accepted the invitation with the kind of abandon that would be typical in a truly communal setting, by getting up and dancing right in front of the stage, most played while sitting politely in their chairs.

When, on the ride to Gejayan, Nick asked Sutanto what his music was like now, Sutanto likened it to “fluxus,” and said it was “more sociological.” He described himself as less of a “composer,” and more of an “agitator.” Sutanto had, in fact, taken a leading role in organizing protests by vendors working in stalls by the entrance to Borobudur in response to plans to replace their stalls with a shopping center. The protests involved performing artists, including a group of dancers that a newspaper caption identified as an “artists community from the slopes of Gunung Merapi” presenting “happening art” (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 19 December 2002).

As much as agitating, Sutanto had come to occupy himself with organizing arts events. Foremost among these is what came to be called the *Festival Lima Gunung* (Five Mountain Festival), which has been held annually since the first in 2002. The title of the festival references the peaks that surround the Magelang area, but as Sutanto explained in a newspaper interview, “the mountains serve more as a symbol of rural groups that have long been sidelined by government institutions rather than a mere indication of origin.” The festival “aims at affirming that outside the government and political elite—with their frequent mismanagement of the population—there is an ongoing process of artistic creation in villages, or on mountain slopes, to maintain traditions and instinctive abilities.” Sutanto has
been the driving force behind the festival, but at the same time, he is concerned with providing “opportunity and trust to art communities to manage their own affairs, which have previously been in the hands of other circles” (Sutanto, quoted and paraphrased by Sudiarno 2004).

For Sutanto himself, the “arts community of the ‘five mountains’ that encircle Borobudur temple” represents a potent alternative to the urban elite-centered arts world he has, for the most part, left behind. As he declared in the abstract for a presentation at the 2007 Asian Composers League meeting in New Zealand (which his mentor Jack Body played a key role in organizing) “I have become disaffected with the dominant urban arts bureaucracy that relegates rural culture to the stereotypical ‘farmer’s strength’.” Sutanto proposed “‘Unique potential’” as “another descriptive of this ‘village’ culture,” adding that

in reality the diversity is much broader and richer, with its aesthetic vision and perspective of function in art. Further, and still more ‘wild’ descriptions of rhythm, melody, visual arts, theatre, ritual, literature and religion, myth and mystery, philosophy and politics extend to the unexplainable and unfathomable.81

It was not only the “dominant urban arts bureaucracy” that Sutanto took issue with, but also the urban artists they primarily served. Driving back from our visit to Gejayan, Sutanto opined that “city musicians are boring,” naming some of the more prominent figures in musik kontemporer: Djaduk Ferianto, Sapto Raharjo, I Wayan Sadra, and Franki Raden.

Nevertheless, Sutanto has far from completely severed his connections with the urban kontemporer scene. The video documenting the performance of the orkes teruntung from Gejayan shows among the audience members Emha Ainun Nadjib, a poet with whom Djaduk Ferianto has worked; Setyaji Dewanto, a musician who played regularly with Sapto Raharjo,

and worked with him on the Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival; and Michael Asmara. Asmara told me that Sutanto has complained about not being invited to perform at the YGF, revealing his interest in participating at the same time as it points to his disagreement with its own open-mic approach as an alternative to the “dominant urban arts bureaucracy.” Despite not participating, Sutanto does, according to Asmara, watch regularly (Michael Asmara, p.c., 13 August 2005).

Reclaiming Kontemporer

It is, however the “rural mountain communities,” with what in his ACL presentation he called “their wild dreams,” whose “culture” Sutanto wishes to “represent,” and with whom his “productivity is aligned.”\(^{82}\) It is these communities, he asserted when we spoke in 2004, that were “truly avant-garde.” To a significant extent, in designating them so Sutanto is reclaiming the term to refer to what he considered progressive from a broader social and spiritual perspective. Sutanto has, he told me, written appreciatively in Tempo about the greater role of animism in religion in various areas around Gunung Merbabu, arguing that monotheism reduces creativity. In invoking the concept of the avant-garde, Sutanto is seemingly thinking of the concern, shared by both historical avant-garde movements such as Dada and Constructivism, and neo-avant-garde ones such as Fluxus, with breaking down the distinction between art and life. At the same time, the international avant-garde remained for Sutanto an important point of reference. A collection of writings he published in 2002 includes essays on “Experimental Music According to Jack Body,” “Pioneers” such as John

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Cage and Olivier Messiaen, and the “Craziness” (‘Gila’) of the twentieth century as manifest in the work of Igor Stravinsky, Charles Ives, and Frank Zappa. It also includes essays honoring the contributions to Indonesian music of Slamet Abdul Sjukur and Suka Hardjana.

While in some of Sutanto’s collaborations, such as the one that formed the orkes teruntung in Gejayan, traditional aesthetics are fundamentally left intact, in others, such as “Show Sexy,” the impact of a sensibility shaped by the kind of conspicuous experimentalism characteristic of urban-based movements such as Fluxus is significant. This impact is also seemingly evident in a group that Sutanto presumably brought, along with the Gejayan orkes teruntung, to perform in Jakarta—not at one of the prestigious venues in the center of the city, but at a “cultural night” organized by the Urban Poor Consortium and held outdoors in Cibubur, a neighborhood near the city’s southern edge. The VCD documentation of the event that Sutanto gave me (produced by Urbanpoor Media) does not clearly link the footage of different performers with their names, which appear only in the opening credits, but the performance in question is, I believe, the one titled “Topeng Kontrol Trias Politika.” The title references “Montesquieu’s threefold division of political authority: the legislative, judicial, and executive powers” (Kamus-Indonesia Inggris, s.v. “trias politika”). The performance brought together “Senirupa Pertunjukan Lereng Tidar,” a performance art group from a neighborhood in Magelang (senirupa = visual art, pertunjukan = performance); a group of art students from Magelang; and a group from the Padepokan Budaya Sumbing, a cultural center named after the volcano to the northwest of Magelang. On the upper of the two-level stage are musicians and dancers in traditional dress: blangkon (a traditional headdress), black jackets, and in the case of the dancers, black and white checked jarik, a cloth similar to a sarung worn around the waist over trousers. The musicians played various small gongs and
drums similar to the auxiliary percussion in the orkes teruntung. As they played, a rather differently attired group marched into position, and then marched or hopped up and down in place in a line facing the audience, on the lower level. They wore shorts or mid-calf-length trousers; baggy suit jackets, and in some cases ties, but no shirts; and either boots, socks, or bare feet, in one case painted as if wearing socks. Most distinctive were their topeng (masks), which resembled rather crude versions of traditional topeng, but with erect phalluses in place of noses. One of the performers had a condom dangling from the end of his. Which models this performance and others like it draw upon is a question that bears further investigation, as blatantly sexual content is by no means unprecedented in the traditional Javanese performing arts, if perhaps not quite as deliberately lewd as here. If the performance can be considered avant-garde, it may be precisely because it channels such older modes of expressing sexuality that have been excised in sanitized versions of traditional forms that have been “upgraded” to become art.  

There are many other questions that need to be answered. I was unable to ascertain even basic factual details about the Festival Lima Gunung or other projects Sutanto had undertaken or inspired, as when I returned to Mendut in 2005 Sutanto was fully preoccupied with the dire situation faced by his teenage son, who had been arrested for possession of a small amount of marijuana and was being held in an adult prison. When I went with Sutanto to the court room for the issuing of his son’s sentence, I did, however, have an opportunity to speak

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83. See, for example, Amrih Widodo’s study of how government sponsored programs sought to “domesticate” the social dance form tayuban—a form in which professional female entertainers are hired to dance with male guests at social events—by “transforming it into an art form” (Widodo 1997).
84. The disproportionate punishment was interpreted as vengeance for Sutanto’s role in preventing the construction of the shopping center at Borobudur.
briefly with a few people that had worked with Sutanto, and thereby gained a glimpse of some of the other personalities in the scene. There were two dancers, Wastiko and Wendi, who seemed to be in their thirties. They taught part time at universities, in Jogja and Surabaya respectively, and from their deportment struck me as having been educated, if not raised, in urban centers. A particularly interesting character was an older man named Sucoro who was an activist in the community around Borobudur. He seemed to be a local, but had with him a book on existential philosophy. When I asked him about it, he told me that a tourist had given it to him. His case suggests other vectors for the kind of modernist influence that would be consonant with the intellectual milieu at festivals like Nur Gora Rupa in Solo, or the events that Sutanto put on in Mendut in the 1990s. One of these, which with tongue in cheek was titled the “First Worldwide Cultural Congress” (*Kongres Kebudayaan se Dunia I*), convened notable figures in Indonesian *kontemporer* arts world, such as Bagong Kussudiardjo, Goenawan Mohamad, the poet and cultural critic Nirwan Dewanto, and the visual artist Heri Dono (Sudiarno 2000).

Of course, one would want to know more about the full range of people that have come to be involved in the activity that Sutanto seems to be at the center of: artists who, like Sutanto, were educated at formal institutions, including those in Magelang; performers who are not formally educated, at least not in the performing arts, who work primarily as farmers; and other members of the communities, who constitute the primary audience for the Festival Lima Gunung and other such events. One would also want to have a better understanding of the social, cultural, and economic context, and of other forces which act upon the area’s cultural ecology. This is true of all of the artistic activity surveyed in this chapter, and indeed in this study. But it is especially important with cases such as Sutanto’s work with the
mountain communities surrounding Magelang, which constitute a truly alternative populism.

As distinct as they are from one another, the other cases—Sadra’s avant-garde jam band Sono Seni; Djaduk Ferianto’s engagement with industri; Sapto Raharjo’s own multimedia performance events, and the eclecticism of the Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival which Sapto founded and led; Iwan Hassan’s finding refuge from the commercialism of the Indonesian jazz and classical music scenes in his progressive rock band Discus; and Yasudah’s ventures into mixophony with Sareng Damelan—all take place within the cultural sphere of urban Indonesia. They all engage with various more popular musical facets of that cultural sphere of which musik kontemporer is itself a more specialized part. With the exception of Hasan’s Discus, which rose to considerable prominence within its own specialized niche, they have all absorbed more aesthetic influence than they have exuded. Yasudah’s project at Telaga Madirda, Slamet Abdul Sjukur’s collaboration with residents of Trawas, and Sutanto’s work with the mountain communities in the Magelang area especially, are noteworthy less as transformations of their own aesthetics as creative musicians, and more as engagements with rural communities on their own turf. In the case of Sutanto’s work, because it has been so sustained, the impact on the artistic life of at least some of the communities seems to have been quite significant.

It is not that Sutanto has converted individual musicians to one or another version of musik kontemporer, in the way that Tony Prabowo and Arjuna “poisoned” singer Nyak Ina Raseuki. There does seem to have been some adoption of at least the term “happening art,” which presumably was introduced by Sutanto. Besides the use of “happening art” at the protest against the shopping center at Borobudur, a blog from a Catholic church and educational center in the village of Selo, located at the summit of the pass between Gunung
Merapi and Gunung Merbabu, displayed photographs of what it called “happening art” in conjunction with Christmas celebrations, and to counteract the use of narcotic drugs among youth. It may be, however, that the term designates little more than the presence of unusual costumes and perhaps antics at otherwise routine dance presentations.

In any case, the use of the term stands as a rather different example of the “internationalization” of aspects of “twentieth-century avant-gardes,” and specifically, of at least the name of a form developed by “the now-global Cageian experimental movement,” than those alluded to by Georgina Born (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000: 20), and examined by John Corbett (2000). It is an internationalization that goes beyond the network of interconnected scenes in the world’s major metropolises, which are centered around Western composers and their jet-setting or ex-patriate non-Western peers. It goes beyond efforts to join and extend that network represented by the Art Summit Indonesia and the Yogyakarta Contemporary Music Festival. There is some amount of diffusion of ideas, and certain practices and attitudes, deriving from the international avant-garde. Sutanto also insists that his projects are “kontemporer,” and not traditional (Sutanto, p.c., 9 August 2004). But rather than groom the villagers he works with to be successful in the urban-centered realm of musik kontemporer, Sutanto is more concerned with pushing those villagers, and those urban artists who will pay attention, to recognize that what they do is at least as vital and worthy—that it is no less kontemporer than what is usually recognized as musik kontemporer.

Conclusion

In the preceding pages, I have set out, first and foremost, to explain what *musik kontemporer* is—or more precisely, after asserting at the outset that it is not a genre but a field of musical activity, what kind of musical activity it encompasses—and to account for how it came to have the profile it does.

In part, my approach has been historiographic. In the middle part, the two chapters on the history of *musik kontemporer* proper, I have pieced together accounts of the emergence of its three most significant initial scenes, and profiles of some of the figures central to them. I have drawn from various sources: a combination of writings from the time that have been published or that I retrieved from archives; retrospective accounts, by scholars and participants, Indonesian and otherwise; and oral history, gleaned from my interviews.

In the preceding two chapters of the first part, on *musik kontemporer*’s prehistory, I have drawn more extensively on a range of existing scholarship to fill out the picture provided by earlier writings by a smaller number of Indonesians. There, my concern was to show the connections, and lack thereof, between those involved in *musik kontemporer* and the musicians and composers who came before; between *musik kontemporer* itself, other contemporary Indonesian musics important to it, and past musical practices; and between the ideas behind *musik kontemporer* and intellectual threads that go further back. The chapters support a critical take on the idea of understanding the present and more recent past through
an understanding of the more distant past, by examining more precisely the relationship of *musik kontemporer* to its precursors and to earlier legacies.

The three chapters of the third and final part include some further intellectual history, in examining the concerns behind the establishment of *musik kontemporer*’s most important forum, the Pekan Komponis Muda. But mostly I have focused in on individuals, combining biography, profiles of their work as composers, and a reckoning of their artistic, ethical, and critical perspectives on themselves, each other, and *musik kontemporer* as whole. The case studies in these three chapters are a lens through which I have probed the impact of two predicaments. The first is what I describe as an absence of aesthetic authority that specifically affected Western-oriented composers, but that has also played a key role in determining the balance and relationship between *musik kontemporer*’s Western-oriented and traditionally-based sides. The second is a concern with *musik kontemporer*’s obscurity, a concern that cut across the Western-oriented/traditionally-based distinction, that gave rise to a more unruly eclecticism, and that has consequently blurred the boundaries between *musik kontemporer* and other musics.

In all of this, I have endeavored to listen and engage with the voices of the individuals I write about with care and respect, to take their points of view seriously and to put them at the center of my account. I cannot, however, claim to be a completely disinterested and impartial scribe, even if I have mostly managed to set aside, or better, transcend biases I once held more strongly. My attention to *musik kontemporer* as a scholar grew out of my earlier involvement as a performer and composer who collaborated with a number of traditionally-based composers affiliated with ASKI Solo. With great admiration for their work, I was motivated to scrutinize the question of Western influence, in order to substantiate my sense
that it represented something other than the simple adoption of Western models of new music. In the end, shifting from the question of influence to identifying and charting the sources and distribution of aesthetic authority, I ended up paying just as much attention to the experience and work of Western-oriented composers. I was also, because of my initial sympathies, motivated to argue for the strength and self-sufficiency of traditionally-based composers—to assert that they are not just younger siblings following in their older Western-oriented siblings’ footsteps, attempting to fit into their hand-me-down shoes as best they can, despite having differently shaped feet (because of their different musical foundations).

Shifting to an examination of *musik kontemporer* as a whole, I have confirmed that its traditionally-based side is in many important respects stronger than its Western-oriented side—stronger in its institutional base, its level of self-assuredness, and how it is regarded by those who confer authority and opportunity—and at least as well represented in the field. But in the process of painting a broader picture, I have also taken account of work that crosses the Western-oriented/traditionally-based divide, mostly due to what I characterize as the nativism of those from the Western-oriented side. I was further impelled to recognize the substantial amount of work that engages in various ways with *musik kontemporer*’s popular other, or that in different ways departs from its modernist and experimentalist centers of gravity.

My study is occupied to a significant degree with documentation. I do advance arguments about how I believe the evidence I present should be interpreted, and those arguments involve a certain amount of theorizing. But as much as possible, I have tried to follow my evidence, to allow my theorizing and my arguments to grow out of my engagement with the findings of my research. The priority I have given to documentation was, I believe, what was called for by my topic. For while particular aspects of *musik kontemporer* have received scholarly
attention, there was, in my opinion, no adequate overview of the field as a whole. There was certainly nothing that put it in historical perspective while also being grounded by ethnographic inquiry. I cannot claim to have produced an exhaustive treatment of my topic—I regret, for example, not having provided more than passing acknowledgement of some of the important work coming out of Bandung. Similarly, much more could be said about other work being done in Jakarta. My study overlaps somewhat, but mostly complements and is complemented by, the important work of my colleague and friend Andrew Clay McGraw, which focuses on the vitally important *musik kontemporer* scene in Bali, and involves a more intensive application of social and cultural theory, and more attention to matters of political economy. And then there is the spread of *musik kontemporer* to Indonesia’s “outer islands,” represented in my study only by passing reference to work by Minangkabau composers from West Sumatra.

My contribution, relative to McGraw’s, is perhaps more modest theoretically, but more ambitious in scope. Though it falls short of being truly comprehensive, I believe it does cover the most significant bases, and as such it lays crucially important groundwork for further studies of *musik kontemporer* in Indonesia. Beyond *musik kontemporer*, it contributes an important perspective to the broader study of music in contemporary Indonesia, and suggests lines of inquiry that could be productively applied to contemporary musics in other parts of the world as well. By way of conclusion, I turn now to some more particular thoughts on how my findings and arguments relate and contribute to directions in Indonesian music studies, ethnomusicology, and the study of culture more generally.
Positioning my Contribution

Bruno Nettl begins his 1985 book *The Western Impact on World Music* by asserting:

During the last hundred years, the most significant phenomenon in the global history of music has been the intensive imposition of Western music and musical thought upon the rest of the world. (Nettl 1985: 3)

Nettl’s examination of “the formidable number of responses” to this imposition was part of a general shift in ethnomusicology away from its singular focus on the distinctiveness of non-Western musical cultures, and toward a concern with how musical cultures were changing. Hybrid forms, shunned by pioneers of the field such as Jaap Kunst, and forms that were fundamentally Western in their musical idiom, began to receive serious scholarly consideration—though more slowly in some quarters, such as Indonesianist ethnomusicology, than others.¹

Through examining Indonesian *musik kontemporer*, a form that would appear to be the result of Western influence, this study contributes to a reexamination of the phenomenon first comprehensively surveyed by Nettl. In this reexamination, the phenomenon is formulated somewhat differently, as I discuss below. But there is also a more direct challenge to Nettl’s assertion.

At least as significant a phenomenon in music since the early twentieth century, in the West no less than anywhere else, is the industrialization and commercialization of music. The majority of music most of the world encounters today comes to us by way of the music industry—referring first and foremost to those conglomerates whose business is the

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1. Indonesianist ethnomusicology has largely caught up, however, as a special issue of *Asian Music* focused on Indonesian popular music attests (Wallach and Clinton 2013).
production and dissemination of music through broadcasts and recordings. And the majority of that music, in most places, is what we call popular music. This is certainly the case in North America. It is also the case in most of Indonesia.

This study has not concerned itself primarily with the history of Indonesian popular music or of the Indonesian music industry. But at the same time, that history is centrally important to the history of musik kontemporer, its emergence, and its acquisition of its distinctive profile. It was popular music genres that were most dominant in the musical life of colonial society in the Dutch East Indies, and subsequently the public culture of independent Indonesia. It was popular music that more fundamentally informed what there was of a classical music scene, giving it a predominantly paraclassical constitution that exasperated musik kontemporer’s precursors from the 1940s and 1950s, and foiled their attempts to steer the scene in a direction that would support a practice of art music composition more in line with the canon of Western art music. The dominance of popular music was decried by the next generation of Western-oriented figures as well, such as Suka Hardjana, who once likened popular music to “poison.” The response of the traditional performing arts to the increasing dominance of commercialized popular culture was similarly disparaged by Hardjana’s traditionally-based counterpart Humardani, who characterized prominent instances of that response as “idiotic” and “kitsch.” The creative work by the younger composers that Hardjana and Humardani oversaw in the 1970s and 1980s—work that established the field of musik kontemporer proper—was intended as an alternative. Initially, this work was predominantly experimentalist in character; in the case of Western-oriented composers, this was in large part because the paraclassically inclined classical music scene provided little in the way of opportunity or support. But since the 1990s, an increasing
number of composers, Western-oriented, traditionally-based, as well as those in between, have engaged with aspects of popular music, while continuing, for the most part, to avoid industri. They have done so in a bid to broaden the socio-aesthetic base for their work, but in the process, they have greatly complicated a sense of what *musik kontemporer* is.

More centrally, my argument relates to efforts to complicate the cultural imperialism thesis, a thesis Nettl at once reiterated, in characterizing the flow of music and musical thought from the West as an “intensive imposition,” even as he challenged it by turning his focus to the tremendous variety of responses to that flow. Subsequent ethnomusicological studies of popular musics in different parts of the world have seized upon terms such as glocalization in drawing attention to the dynamics in the adaptation of global forms to local conditions. More recently, turning toward examples that do not display audible marks of indigenization, scholars have highlighted how transnational cultural forms are strategically deployed. Jeremy Wallach argues that “the real question . . . is not how Indonesian punk is distinctively Indonesian but rather how punk music and style operate within an Indonesian national youth culture” (Wallach 2008: 113). Brent Luvaas describes Indonesian indie pop groups as “accomplices” and “coconspirators” rather than “victims” of a globalization they regard as an alternative to existing, mostly nationally imposed, constructions of locality (Luvaas 2009: 248-249). Emma Baulch identifies similar motivations for the “gesturing elsewhere” of Balinese youth involved in reggae, punk and death metal (2007).

In my case, I am dealing with a field of music that encompasses both activity that is indebted to foreign models, and activity whose relationship to foreign models is more ambiguous. *Musik kontemporer* refers equally to the work of Western-oriented composers with a strong affinity for the musical idioms of mid-twentieth century European modernism,
and to that of those traditionally-based composers whose no less modernist approach based on the exploration of sound relates only indirectly to the international avant-garde, instead taking its cue from ideas about the imperative to innovate that have been abstracted from Western modernist aesthetics. While these facets are particularly exemplary, there are many others. There are plenty of composers who draw upon both traditional and non-traditional sources—or, as Djaduk Ferianto calls them, “references.” Most, though not all, of the non-traditional ones would be thought of as Western—though as often as not they would relate at least as much to the realm of the popular as that of the avant-garde. The picture is further complicated by the fact that those composers who do, in some of their work, hew closely to canonically modernist idioms such as serialism, also compose for gamelan and other traditional Indonesian instruments. They may or may not be any less Western-oriented in their basic outlook on composition, but their output cannot be regarded as completely Westernized as that of, for example, Balinese headbangers.

**Other Theories, Considered**

In trying to make sense of *musik kontemporer*’s variegated profile, and how it acquired it, I have not, as I noted in the introduction, adopted any single major theoretical framework. This in no way suggests that available theories could not provide insightful perspectives. The different ways of theorizing hybridity, for example, could be productively employed in a number of cases. The more straightforward definition of “cultural hybridity” as involving the “mixing of elements developed in separate semiotic worlds,” used by R. Anderson Sutton (Sutton 2010) in examining a number of “encounters” between gamelan and Western music—one of which, the “Ethno-Pop- Jazz-Fusion” of Krakatau, lies just outside the
boundary of *musik kontemporer*—applies equally well to cases like Djaduk Ferrianto, who in looking to Krakatau and others in the realm of *industri* straddles that boundary. There’s a related type of hybridity in the methods Tony Prabowo developed to create music in collaboration with the traditionally-based Minangkabau musicians in the New Jakarta Ensemble that remained basically avant-garde in style. But in Prabowo’s case, and that of Michael Asmara, who has more doggedly stuck to creating through-composed scores in his pieces for gamelan instruments, the more relevant theories of hybridity are those that address questions of subjectivity in postcolonial conditions, such as W. E. B. DuBois’s notion of double-consciousness (DuBois 1989), or Homi Bhabha’s examinations of in-betweenness (Bhabha 1994).

These theories of hybridity are less helpful, however, in apprehending the centrally important traditionally-based scene that formed at ASKI Solo in the late 1970s, and its signature practice of sound-exploration. Extracting the widest possible array of sounds out of gamelan and other traditional instruments was not an element derived from the separate semiotic world of a foreign model, but was grounded in indigenous relationships to sound and sound-making. It did involve a shift in consciousness, but rather than finding themselves in between the categories of Western and non-Western, the tension they experienced was between their commitments to the traditional and the modern. Looking at the whole picture, *musik kontemporer* cannot be spoken of as a hybrid genre, as it is not a genre at all. Rather, it is a field encompassing a diverse range of creative musical activity. Its sense of unity, to the extent that it has one, is not that of a hybrid, but, to borrow a different metaphor from the natural sciences, more like conglomerate rock.

It makes some sense, at least in approaching the two most exemplary aspects of *musik*
kontemporer, to go back to the old distinction between Westernization and modernization. But this too has its problems, at least as the distinction was deployed in ethnomusicology before other issues, and with them other theoretical frameworks, displaced it as a significant concern. The practice of sound exploration involves a more radical and deliberate kind of aesthetic change than the adoption of notation, the founding of conservatories, or the use of electronic sound technologies—the cases of modernization that scholars of Javanese gamelan have examined. It is, with respect to Nettl’s definition (Nettl 1985: 20), more than an “incidental movement” away from traditional practices. At the same time, although the notions of artistic modernity that were its impetus can be traced back to the West, it was conceived as and felt to be something other than a “movement . . . in the direction of Western music and musical life” (ibid.). The atonal string quartets of Michael Asmara do seemingly represent such a movement: not just the Westernization of a non-Western music through “the substitution of central features of Western music for their non-Western analogues” (ibid.) but the wholesale adoption of a Western model. Yet Asmara himself is far from thoroughly Westernized.

I have therefore been concerned with more explicitly delimiting the extent and impact of Western influence, not only on the traditionally-based side of musik kontemporer, but also on its Western-oriented side. I have also been concerned with accounting for what it is that binds, however loosely, these and other aspects of musik kontemporer together.

My Theoretical Contributions

As a way of accounting for the independence of the traditionally-based scene that developed at ASKI Solo from the international avant-garde that in important respects it resembled, I
developed a theory of ethnological valence. The push to break free from the rules that governed the traditional performing arts, and to engage in radical experimentation, came first and foremost from ASKI’s director, Gendhon Humardani, whose ideas about artistic modernity were very much influenced by his engagement with modern dance and Western aesthetic philosophy. These ideas were presented, however, in a frame of reference that prioritized the traditional Indonesian performing arts that were ASKI’s nearly exclusive concern. Because of this, and because of the long standing pattern in Indonesia’s cultural elite of what I have termed cosmopolitan nativism, a pattern to which Humardani was heir, the ethnological valence of ideas about artistic modernity and practices of experimentalism as Western were, for composers at ASKI, almost fully attenuated.

In practical terms, what has bound the different aspects of *musik kontemporer* together—indeed, what established it as a field of creative musical activity in the first place—are the forums at which it is presented. The first and by all accounts the most important of these was the Pekan Komponis Muda, which from the first meeting in 1979 brought together both Western-oriented and traditionally-based composers. But more than simply providing opportunities for young composers to have their work heard, forums such as the PKM functioned as centrally important nodes in the web of relationships—of people to each other, and between people and institutions—through which aesthetic authority was variously conferred or denied, reinforced or questioned.

There were not separate webs for Western-oriented and traditionally-based composers, but rather one, even though the sources of their authority—their grounding in a musical tradition, or perceived lack thereof, in the case of Western-oriented composers—were distinct. It is a fundamental and pervasive distinction, recognized by Indonesian composers
themselves, even as an increasing number of them cross over the divide, or fall in between. It persists in no small part because the divide is even more pronounced in the larger world of music in Indonesia. But within the sphere of *musik kontemporer*, the distinction, though recognized, has not ossified into labels. The composers involved with *musik kontemporer* bring to it their various backgrounds and affiliations, and the music they create takes many different forms. Some pieces are more solidly identified as *musik kontemporer* than others, but this does not have to do with the traditionally-based/Western-oriented distinction. Rather, it has to do with how strongly they relate to *musik kontemporer*’s experimentalist and modernist centers of gravity—centers of gravity within one single field of *musik kontemporer*.

What makes *musik kontemporer*’s profile especially distinctive is not simply that it encompasses both Western-oriented and traditionally-based manifestations; that is common enough in those parts of Asia and other places where contemporary art music has been taken up. It is the extent to which these strains coexist and interact within a single field, and the prevalence and prominence of work that in various ways relates to traditional music. And more than any other theory, it is the concept of aesthetic authority, and the charting of its patterns of distribution—where it is drawn from, by whom, to whom it flows, and who accumulates it—that I have found most useful in accounting for why this is so, and how it came to be.

It is both in its presence and its absence that aesthetic authority has shaped the profile of *musik kontemporer*. Much of the impetus for *musik kontemporer*’s initial emergence and development in the 1970s and 80s—especially in terms of securing and then making use of an institutional base in recently founded cultural centers and councils in Jakarta—came from a
handful of composers and musicians who had gained their own authority as artists from studying and working in Europe. They gained support from those others among Indonesia’s cosmopolitan cultural elite who believed that Indonesia should, as a modern nation, have composers of contemporary art music. The preeminent example in the late 1970s was Slamet Abdul Sjukur, who brought back to Indonesia a decidedly avant-gardist compositional voice he had developed over his fourteen years in Paris.

Looking at the bigger picture, however, it is the absence of authority that has had the greater impact on the Western-oriented side of *musik kontemporer*. Sjukur and his colleagues Suka Hardjana, the initial director of the Pekan Komponis Muda, and Frans Haryadi, who played an important role in founding the PKM, returned to Indonesia from Europe to find a sorely underdeveloped classical music scene, and nearly nothing of value to them in terms of creative work. Their precursors had failed to establish a classically-oriented practice of art music composition, or to shift the aesthetic constitution of a musical scene that from its colonial era roots had been predominantly paraclassical, with little regard for the authority of the Western art music canon. Their students at the Institut Kesenian Jakarta, and those at Akademi Musik Indonesia in Jogja, were thus unable to gain the kind of foundation that Hardjana, Haryadi, and Sjukur, and AMI’s director Suhascarya, deemed necessary. These senior figures dealt with this situation in very different ways. Sjukur pushed his students to make do with what they had, while at the other extreme, Suhascarya upheld rigid and conservative standards that served only to drive composition to AMI’s margins. In both cases, composers in these two Western-oriented scenes tended toward experimentalism, and nativism, though there were also those who continued to find themselves drawn to idioms rooted in the Western art music tradition. Those who have continued to compose have
struggled to gain a sense of their own aesthetic authority, even in the case of the most successful, such as Tony Prabowo.

The other effect of the long standing absence of authority that has hampered the development of art music composition in Western-oriented circles, has been to allow the traditionally-based circles to develop more freely on their own terms. More precisely, because they were not stuck in the shadow of a well established Western-oriented scene that had behind it the towering edifice of the Western art music tradition and its internationalized avant-garde extension, traditionally-based scenes were better able to make even those terms that did derive from elsewhere their own. Humardani—who also contributed much to establishing an institutional base for musik kontemporer—was able to present ideas of Art as universal, and the young composers at ASKI Solo whom he pushed to break free from traditional conventions devised their own ways of doing so, rather than following anyone else as a model.

Equally important as the absence of a strong local representation of a foreign authority—one that given the general prevalence of xenocentrism in Indonesia might have had considerable power—is the authority that traditionally-based musik kontemporer itself enjoys, precisely because it is based in indigenous traditions that have considerable aesthetic authority within the niches of the cultural ecology it occupies. While the incursions of a mostly Western-oriented commercialized popular culture had, since the final decades of the colonial era, posed an increasingly unavoidable challenge to gamelan musicians in Java’s urban centers—leading to the populist innovations of Wasitodipuro and Nartosabdho reviewed in chapter 2—it was not until the mid 1970s that it began eroding the widespread social base of support for gamelan in the rural areas from which so many of the composers in
the scene at ASKI Solo came. Javanese gamelan was thus very much a vital tradition and the primary frame of reference for those composers who established themselves in the 1980s as primary contributors to the new field of *musik kontemporer*.

That young composers at ASKI were given the opportunity to present their compositional efforts on a national stage has to do, however, with a different dimension of tradition’s authority. The notion that gamelan and other traditional forms of expression were old-fashioned—or worse, that they embodied an old feudal order and were thus impediments to progress—had gained general currency among those who regarded the Western-oriented public culture centered in Jakarta as Indonesia’s future. Among a crucially important segment of Indonesia’s intellectual and cultural elite, however, it was cosmopolitan nativism, with its deep roots in Indonesia’s imagining itself as a nation, that prevailed. Thus, conservatories and academies for the traditional performing arts were founded, and provided with considerable resources to carry out their programs. The vitality of the traditional performing arts also impressed up and coming artists in the 1970s associated with the de facto national arts council (DKJ), national arts center (TIM), and national arts institute (IKJ) in Jakarta, leading to boldly nativist movements in contemporary theater and dance. When the Pekan Komponis Muda was launched in 1979 as a commensurately vital initiative in music, traditionally-based composers from other regional centers were given equal billing. They demonstrated, as Suka Hardjana proclaimed, that “tradition is modern.” Regarded by Hardjana as having a more substantial foundation—giving them, in my terms, greater aesthetic authority—they came to dominate the PKM, and in doing so solidly established themselves as a centrally important part of *musik kontemporer*. The traditional has thus continued to be a powerful source of aesthetic authority, even as *musik kontemporer* as a field has grown more eclectic and
disparate.

**Broader Implications**

My study joins others that call for a counterbalancing of two significant tendencies evident not only in ethnomusicology, but across a broad range scholarly disciplines that deal with things cultural. These tendencies represent undeniably important theoretical and methodological advances, and shifts toward new realities. But important as they are, when taken too far they can lead us to overlook other on the ground realities.

The first tendency is the preoccupation with the effects and manifestations of the formidably powerful forces of globalization—the increased flow of information, commerce, and people in a world that has always been connected, but that over the past century has become more intensively so. *Musik kontemporer* might be assumed to be an instance of the “internationalization of twentieth-century avant-gardes,” or even more specifically the localized Indonesian manifestation of “the now-global Cageian experimental movement” (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000: 20). Both are phenomena that could benefit from a more rigorous application of perspectives developed with respect to other instances of transnationalism in music and the arts. However, as my study shows, *musik kontemporer* represents something else. Influence from a still predominantly Western international avant-garde played an important role in stimulating composers in certain scenes of *musik kontemporer*. Much of that influence came via senior figures who brought it back from more or less extended periods of study abroad. But *musik kontemporer* is not, on the whole, a transnational form, despite the efforts of some, like Michael Asmara, to turn it into one. Its distinctive profile has much more to do with local conditions, not only the prominent place of
traditional music and other performing arts in the cultural sphere it inhabits, but also the relatively underdeveloped state of Western art music that might otherwise support more sustained transnational connections. My study thus suggests that even studies of self-consciously modernist forms may benefit from greater attention to “theorizing the local,” as Richard Wolf has proposed as a more productive approach for community-based and locally focused performance traditions in South Asia (Wolf 2009).

The second and much broader tendency is perhaps one of the most significant over the past few decades, part of the wave (or waves) of theorizing in the wake of intellectual movements such as poststructuralism. It is the tendency to focus attention on the extent to which so many types of cultural phenomenon once taken to be natural are in fact constructions. A key instance for ethnomusicology is the notion of tradition. As the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out, many supposedly old traditions are in fact recent inventions (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Hobsbawm’s intervention is actually quite straightforward, and he distinguishes invented traditions from both “‘custom’ which dominates so-called ‘traditional’ societies” (ibid.:2) and “the strength and adaptability genuine traditions” (ibid.:8). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, examining the related concept of heritage, goes somewhat further in arguing that heritage, though “it looks old,” is “actually something new,” a “mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 7).

Interventions such as these have effected an immeasurably important shift in the way scholars approach their objects of study, and more generally in the way we understand so many aspects of human existence. They have changed, probably irreversibly, the way we think about both big concepts such as tradition and heritage, and also more specific
phenomena, like experimentalism. But as much as we should avoid reverting to thinking of tradition or experimentalism as stable entities or essential qualities, those terms can still be useful in their unqualified forms if they are understood instead as analytic categories to apply to cultural phenomenon that are not merely constructions.

Benjamin Piekut pointed to this possibility in examining various manifestations of “actually existing experimentalism” in New York in 1964, even as he placed the phrase in scare quotes (Piekut 2011: 8). He acknowledged at the end of his introduction that he is “intrigued by the idea of experimentalism as an arena of risk, testing, and even (productive) failure” (ibid.:19). But mostly he used his introduction to argue that the notion of (American) experimentalism, typically defined by characteristics such as the embrace of indeterminacy, the “welcoming of daily life,” and “rugged individualism” is not an explanation, but an “achievement.” It depends on a “grouping” of composers who embody these qualities, a grouping that is not simply a representation but a narrative that is performed.² His case studies examined “actually existing experimentalism,” but rather than theorizing the fact of their existence, his overarching concern was to place “pressure on accepted narratives”—to challenge accepted notions of what experimentalism is.

In a more recently published collected volume, Piekut has more fully embraced the idea of “actually existing experimentalism” by bringing together others concerned with examining what else experimentalism might be, beyond the accepted paradigmatic examples (Piekut 2014). My own study also contributes to this project—though it too is preoccupied in its own way with challenging an accepted narrative, one that posits experimentalism, and

² Piekut’s argument and method, as he explains, draws upon the actor-network theory of Bruno Latour.
contemporary art music in general, as something that spreads from center (the West) to periphery (the rest of the world). In the case of Indonesian *musik kontemporer*, that is undeniably part of the story. But as I have argued, it is not the whole of it. In future scholarship, even greater attention could be given to the social and cultural conditions that give rise to and sustain experimentalism in music and art, even in cases where there is little or no substantial relationship to the mostly Western high-art models that are taken as its exemplars. This would contribute much to a theorization of experimentalism itself, as mode of artistic production, which perhaps in most cases should include the way in which it is constructed as a category, but need not be limited to or even emphasize that plane of analysis.

The core of *musik kontemporer* is most sensibly understood as an instance of experimentalism. But as this study has shown, it also relates to experimentalism’s putative opposite, the traditional. That term is also problematic, for reasons beyond the fact that it often presents as essential that which is constructed. It is not too narrowly applied, as with experimentalism, but used impossibly broadly. It lacks precision also in its multivalence. It is “considered by some a vitiated, contaminated term,” as Philip Yampolsky notes (Yampolsky 2013:xv), most likely in reference to the baggage it carries, implicated as it is in complex, value-laden discursive histories. Yampolsky might also be responding, in declaring that he finds the concept useful, to the rejection of the traditional as a governing paradigm for ethnomusicology as it has redefined its purview to also embrace that which is the opposite of the traditional: the popular, the modern, the hybrid.

Problematic though it may be, the term traditional is still widely used in ethnomusicology. That is because, underneath the discursive accretions, it does usefully refer to musics and aspects of music making that are real, in the sense that they have an actual
existence, and that are distinctive—and that thus warrant further attention, in the myriad forms they take. They are not unchanging, and need not be pure, but they are nevertheless genuine. What my study shows is that even in the case of a music that might be considered the opposite of traditional, the traditional has been a potent force. This was especially the case through musik kontemporer’s emergence and coalescence in the 1970s and 80s, when the traditional played a centrally important role in establishing musik kontemporer’s distinctive profile. It has remained vitally important to many of those involved with musik kontemporer, as the overviews and profiles in the previous chapter have demonstrated.

Conversely, musik kontemporer has helped to secure a contemporary existence for traditional musics, even as a broader more popular basis for their existence has, in many cases, been lost. Musik kontemporer has, to a significant degree, realized Humardani’s program, even if the forms it has taken are more varied than those he envisioned. Along with other kontemporer performing arts, it has fulfilled the optimistic prediction of the dancer and choreographer Sardono W. Kusumo, noted by Jennifer Lindsay, that increasingly artists would be able to move freely between the once antagonistic worlds of the modern and the traditional. The two have been able to “stimulate each other,” allowing the “traditional arts” to “remain as they always have been, at once traditional and contemporary” (Lindsay 1985: 277-278). In accordance with this perspective, in a recent e-mail the young singer and composer Peni Candra Rini, who studied and now teaches at ISI (ASKI) Solo, has expressed her conviction that “traditional art and contemporary art are like two sides of one coin, that cannot be separated and must always be in rotation, that are of great benefit to the development of traditional arts and world performing arts” (Peni Candra Rini, p.c. via e-mail, 26 March 2014). This may, in the end, be one of musik kontemporer’s more significant
Final Thoughts: The Meanings of Eclecticism and the Future of Musik Kontemporer

In a critical survey of how ethnomusicologists talk about musical multiplicity, Mark Slobin makes a case for the word “eclecticism.” The sense that in his view offers the most potential is one that emphasizes agency. He asks us to “bear in mind that the word’s Greek etymology comes from the idea of choice, selectivity and combination.” He further points to the Oxford English Dictionary’s stress on “eclecticism’s all-important link to open-mindedness,” noting how “after ‘that borrows or is borrowed from diverse sources,’ the OED offers ‘unfettered by narrow system in matters of opinion or practice’ and ‘broad, not exclusive, in matters of taste’.” Such open-mindedness, in Slobin’s view, is “crucial for grasping today’s musical choices.” It stands in contrast to a different, disapproving sense of eclecticism, “the way it traditionally figured in criticism as a kind of absence of originality or defect of taste” (Slobin 2007: 15).

In speaking of musik kontemporer’s “impossibly eclectic profile,” or of its drift “toward a more unruly eclecticism,” my use of the term has rather more to do with this second more judgement-laden sense. This reflects not my own opinions—which I have done my best to set aside, and that in any case on this point are mostly neutral. Instead, it points to the challenge that such eclecticism poses, at least for some, to the sense of musik kontemporer’s coherence and integrity. The sense of eclecticism that appeals to Slobin, on the other hand, gets at the underlying impetus for many of the alternative populisms, and other alternatives to the alternative that musik kontemporer was meant to be, that I survey in chapter 7. This is most clearly the case with I Wayan Sadra, whose musik dialektis, while not using the term eclectic,
very explicitly promotes exactly the kind of borrowing from diverse sources that eclecticism, in its more positive sense, designates.

The contrast between these two senses of eclecticism thus gets at the crux of the debate over what is and is not *musik kontemporer*, which fundamentally is about a struggle to define the boundaries and/or aesthetic focus of the field that the term has referred to. It gets at the tension that arises from movement in opposing directions. There is the centrifugal motion away from *musik kontemporer*’s centers of gravity as I Wayan Sadra, Djaduk Ferianto, Sapto Raharjo, Yasudah, and Sutanto have, in their various ways, sought stronger connections with a broader socio-aesthetic base. And then there is the centripetal motion represented by the critique of such populisms, such as Raseuki calling the “band” or “combo” trend “dangerous” (chapter 7); by Waridi’s renewed assertion of the fundamental difference of the “kontemporer corridor” from “*musik industri*” (chapter 7); and, more positively, by the YCMF’s explicit promotion of serialism and other compositional methods most closely associated with high modernism (chapter 6). All of these involve the exercise of aesthetic authority, through the appeal to aesthetic positions that the establishment of *musik kontemporer* as a field has made more authoritative.

There has similarly been motion both away from and toward the term *musik kontemporer* itself, though these do not necessarily coincide with the motions in practice and ideology described above. *Musik kontemporer* remained, in 2004 and 2005, far and away the most widely used term within the field of musical activity I have examined in this study. Explaining what the term refers to has remained a concern of figures both senior as junior, as clearly signaled by the titles of Suka Hardjana’s 2003 book *Corat-Coret Musik Kontemporer: Dulu dan Kini* (A Sketch of Musik Kontemporer: Then and Now) and Agus Bing’s 2004...
article “Menggugat Istilah ‘Kontemporer’ dalam Festival” (A festival shakes up the term “kontemporer”). But there has also been evidence that some, including some of musik kontemporer’s most prominent figures, have begun to step away from the term. Tony Prabowo and Nyak Ina Raseuki, having grown weary of the polemic around musik kontemporer, have reportedly come to prefer musik baru (new music) (Nyak Ina Raseuki, p.c., 18 August 2005). Michael Asmara opted to use the English language “Contemporary Music” for the festival he founded (chapter 6). Sutanto described the mountain village artists he elects to keep company with, over boring city musicians, as avant-garde, and spoke of their “wild dreams” (chapter 7). Sapto Raharjo quietly abandoned the term kontemporer in expanding the scope of the gamelan festival he founded (chapter 7)—though he also, in commending Asmara at the inaugural YCMF for being the first to “pin the label kontemporer” on his festival (conflating kontemporer and contemporary), expressed his hope that the festival would continue, declaring that he was “addicted” (Sapto Raharjo, quoted in Bing 2004:42).

Returning once again to the question of what musik kontemporer is, it is important to recognize that it is both a discursive formation—an “achievement,” as Piekut would put it—and an actually existing field of creative musical activity. As a field, it has had a shifting relationship to other fields within the cultural ecology of contemporary Indonesia, especially as it has expanded with the participation of a more diverse range of musicians. But nevertheless, because of its history, because of its rather focused emergence in a handful of initial scenes brought together early on by the PKM, it has had a well-defined gravitational

3. Bing’s article was written in response to the inaugural Yogyakarta Contemporary Music Festival, the example of musik kontemporer’s “impossibly eclectic profile” that I discuss at the outset of this study.
center—or rather, a set of gravitational centers in a relatively stable relationship, like a stellar system of several stars orbiting each other. As a discursive formation, an “achievement,” it thus differs from American experimentalism in that it is less a “grouping” formed by imposing a name and a narrative retroactively—claiming Charles Ives as an early pioneer, excluding Miles Davis, or more to the point, Bill Dixon, and other contemporaneous figures grouped instead with jazz (Piekut 2011:8-14)—and more an actual group, or group of groups, of musicians that got their starts at around the same time. Brought into orbit around the focal point of the PKM, the application of the term musik kontemporer to all of these groups—the traditionally-based ones as well as the Western-oriented ones—was uncontroversial.

What has proved more challenging is musik kontemporer’s increasing eclecticism, both in the work of individual composers and in its overall profile. I have jumped from one metaphor to another in describing and explaining both the earlier and more recent situations, and the shift from the former to the latter: the loss of aesthetic anchors, the blurring (or redrawing or effacing) of boundaries, centrifugal versus centripetal motion, and orbiting gravitational centers. Rather than push any one of these further, it seems more effective to draw upon yet another less fanciful and more theoretically developed metaphor. In accounting for the place of the Western-oriented and the traditionally-based in the profile of musik kontemporer, it is the concept of aesthetic authority that I have found to be most useful. The concept is less helpful, however, when it comes to understanding on a theoretical level the increase in eclecticism, accounting only for the waning importance of centralized aesthetic authority, and not for what took its place. A better candidate for that is the more familiar concept of cultural capital—perhaps less as employed by Pierre Bourdieu himself (1984) than how it has been taken up by scholars of popular culture, the pioneer in this regard being Sarah Thornton
The concept of aesthetic authority, as I have used it, has fit my purposes better than cultural capital, as it better describes the more internal logic of how, within what at least initially was a quite circumscribed field, individual artists and the scenes they form relate to each other, and the more intensive relationship of both to specific aesthetic hierarchies—as distinct from a concern with how cultivated dispositions, the capacity to appreciate expressive forms, and education more generally relate to and perpetuate social distinctions. To be sure, those involved with *musik kontemperor* were competing for resources, but these were mostly specific: the resources that would allow them to produce their work and get it performed, and to gain recognition. *Musik kontemperor* did develop at least a limited economy of prestige, even if it was not quite as terminal as that of the avant-garde in the West (McClary 1989). But a no less important factor, which the concept of aesthetic authority better conveys, is the sense of confidence and conviction an individual composer needs in order to create.

The senior figures who in different ways contributed to the emergence of *musik kontemperor* shared the goal of creating a space for and stimulating an interest in music as art. This is especially clear in the writings of Humardani and Hardjana, who in speaking of art’s “principal” function of sustaining a “profound spiritual life” (Humardani, quoted in chapter 4); or of music fulfilling its “artistic aspirations,” to be not only “an object for entertainment” but something that could provide “higher self-worth for a people” (Hardjana, quoted in chapter 5); and in urging young musicians to innovate; expressed ideas consistent with the idea of art as “an independent and privileged realm of spirit, truth, and creativity”

4. See Swartz (1997), especially chapter 4, for a succinct discussion of Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital within a cogent introduction to Bourdieu’s work on the relationship between culture and power.
Something of this conception of art has remained central to the idea of *musik kontemporer*. It is the promise of creating work according to one’s ideals that attracts musicians to the field, at least as much as the relatively meager economic gain, either monetary or cultural. At the same time, the singular importance of the notion of art is diminishing, giving way to other ideas about what music is, and what it is for, such as the greater concern for the social evident in many of the alternative populisms described in chapter 7. There are still some who tend toward the kind of categorical distinctions that Humardani, Hardjana, and others made between music that realizes its potential as art, and music that does not. And the ongoing concern with defining *musik kontemporer* points to a persistent anxiety provoked by the field’s increasing eclecticism. Mostly, however, there has been a greater appreciation of the value of other forms of musical expression. Experimentalism and modernism are still most exemplary within the field of *musik kontemporer*. It is in them, at least for now, that aesthetic authority remains most concentrated. But there has been a move away from these singular gravitational centers toward a more diffuse field. There has been a move toward musical styles that may not be quite as highly valued, but—to more explicitly engage with an economic metaphor—whose value is more liquid, because they have greater currency.

Both discursively, and as an actual field, there is no question that what *musik kontemporer* is will continue to change. It may or may not continue to be the preferred term that it has been. It may come to refer mostly to a smaller set of core practices, though for those it might also be replaced by other terms. Beyond those cores, as a field of activity it is likely that it will continue to diffuse into the broader cultural ecology, becoming less a
distinct entity, and more a tendency. The idea of music as art might become less about a category, and more about a function. The word *kontemporer* might then be understood primarily, as Sadra argued it should, as an adjective, rather than as a noun. Even if all of this were to happen—if *musik kontemporer* effectively ceased to exist in anything like its current form—that outcome need not be regarded as a failure on the part of those who have worked so hard to make *musik kontemporer* what it is. On the contrary, if the ideas and practices that *musik kontemporer* helped to cultivate are taken up more widely, that could be regarded as an even greater success.
Appendix I: Interviews Conducted

Interviews are listed by the primary interviewee (in most cases, an arbitrary distinction), alphabetically according to the way I refer to that person in the text (as I explain in the Technical Notes, in most cases I treat the last given name as if it were a surname, but not for those who are invariably referred to by their first given name), and then by the date of the interview. The list also indicates the city in which the interview was conducted.

Harjito, I. M. Middletown, CT, 17 May 2005.
Sadra, I Wayan. Solo, 4 August 2005.
Sukamso. Solo, 4 August 2004.
Sukerta, Pande Made. Solo, 8 July 2005.
Susilo, Hardja. Honolulu, HI, 21 November 2006.
Appendix II: Participation in Creative Projects

This appendix lists the creative projects of *musik kontemporer* that I have engaged in as a composer/performer/improviser, starting with the project that provided me with my first hands-on introduction to *musik kontemporer*. I as I elaborate in my Acknowledgements, it was in this capacity, rather than as a researcher, that I first became involved with *musik kontemporer*. During my first two trips to Indonesia, in 1993–95 and 2000, when my primary goal was to learn to play traditional Javanese *karawitan*, I also found opportunities to collaborate with Indonesian composer/performer/improvisers. When I returned to Indonesia in 2004 and 2005 to more formally conduct research for this study—research that consisted mostly of talking with those involved in *musik kontemporer*, whether in the formal interviews listed in appendix I or more informal conversations—I continued to engage in such collaborative projects. This activity was not participant-observation, but simply participation; it was not undertaken to support academic research, and was not, at least not during my first trips, accompanied by the all-important ethnographic method of writing fieldnotes. Nevertheless, it was critically important in shaping my understanding of the music and the musical scenes that I would later examine as a scholar. It was also an important dimension of my relationships to both the individuals I worked with, and others aware of this work, whom I have now written about.

1994  Participation in an improvisation led by Pande Made Sukerta on sound sculptures by Hajar Satoto, for the opening of an exhibition at Taman Budaya Surakarta, 26 March.

1994  “three blue lotus.” A piece I composed for bowed gender, kendhang, bowed siter, and melodica, to accompany one section of An Episode of Vishnu, an evening-length dance performance by choreographer Bambang Mbesur. I also performed in a piece composed by Sunardi to accompany another section. Presented at TBS on 14 April.

1994  Project organized by the English composer Adrian Lee, consisting of rehearsals and a recording session, for which I composed my own piece and played in new pieces by Rasita Satriana, Joko Purwanto, Teti Darlenis, and I Nengah Muliana, all faculty at STSI (ASKI) Solo, as well as Adrian Lee. August and September.


1996  Participation as a performer (with Gamelan Madu Sari) in a recording for broadcast and CD release (on and by CBC Radio Two’s Westcoast Performance) that included Sutrisno S. Hartana’s composition “Sangaskara.”

2000  Participation as a performer in a new composition by A. L. Suwardi, presented at Taman Budaya Surakarta. 20 April.

2004  Sekar Anu, the name of an ensemble founded for a collaborative project involving four composer-performers from Indonesia (AL Suwardi, Pande Made Sukerta, Ida Bagus Widnyana, and Dewa Nyoman Supenida), and four from the US (Nick Brooke, Andrew Raffo Dewar, Andrew Clay McGraw, and myself). We presented the collaborative composition “Maya” on 16 July at the Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival, and individual composed pieces at concerts at the Wantilan Bali Hotel, Denpasar, on 27 August, and at the Panggung Tirta Sari, Peliatan, Bali, on 29 August.

2004  Garap Gamelan Reflektif. A concert of new compositions by Sutrisno S. Hartana, in which I participated as a performer. Presented at the Gedung Societet, Taman
Budaya Yogyakarta, 12 July.

2004  “Daily.” One of four compositions by I Wayan Sadra presented on a concert of his work as part of the Art Summit Indonesia, for which I provided technical assistance. Specifically, I manipulated the equalization of the amplified sounds of eggs, thrown by Sadra, striking a nine-by-twelve foot iron sheet to which gas burners and two contact microphones (that I provided) were attached. Presented at the Gedung Kesenian, Jakarta, 12 and 13 September.

2005  “A Piece for 15 Rebab.” Composition by Michael Asmara, which I performed (playing one part live along with a multitrack recording of myself playing the other parts) at the Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival. Studio Misty, 14 July.

2007  Participation as a performer in Semar’s Journey, a collaborative interdisciplinary wayang production by Gamelan Madu Sari, led by Sutrisno S. Hartana.
Glossary

B: Balinese
I: Indonesian
I+: Indonesian and other regional languages
J: Javanese
S: Sundanese

abangan. J: Javanese who are nominally Muslim but whose religious and cultural orientation is fundamentally syncretic.
ACL. Asian Composers League.
ada-ada. J: A category of unmetered song used in Javanese wayang and other dramatic contexts to convey a tense or agitated mood.
alok. J: Non-melodic vocal interjections such as glissandi, often coordinated with important structural points, intended to enliven Javanese gamelan performances.
AMI. Akademi Musik Indonesia. Tertiary-level music conservatory in Jogjakarta, now part of ISI Yogyakarta.
andhegan. J: Short interludes in Javanese gamelan pieces in which the ensemble stops, a pesidhen sings one or more phrases, and the ensemble resumes playing.
angklung. S/B: Pitched bamboo rattle, typically played in groups. Also the name of a type of Balinese gamelan that once included this instrument.
ASKI. Akademi Seni Karawitan Indonesia. Indonesian Academy of Traditional Musical Arts. Name of several tertiary-level conservatories for traditional performing arts.
balungan. J: Skeletal melody of a Javanese gamelan piece, typically played in unison by several metallophones.
Batak. Ethnonym for several related ethnic groups from North Sumatra.
Batavia. Capital of the Dutch East Indies, renamed Jakarta during the Japanese occupation.
bedhaya/srimpi. J: Two highly refined dance forms specific to the Central Javanese courts, involving seven or nine, or four female dancers, respectively.
Betawi. Ethnonym for an ethnic group that formed in the vicinity of Batavia.


bonang. J/S: Gong-chime with ten to fourteen pencon, used in Javanese and Sundanese gamelan.

bonang barung. J: Mid-register bonang in Javanese gamelan, considered a leading instrument.


budayawan. I: Individuals involved with the arts and culture as critics, producers, or administrators.

campursari. I: Hybrid popular Javanese genre, combining gamelan and Western band instruments, most prominently electronic keyboards.

ceng-ceng. B: Balinese gamelan instrument: a cluster of small cymbals mounted on a stand, played with two more small cymbals, one in each hand.

ceng-ceng kopyak. B: Balinese gamelan instrument: two medium-sized cymbal held in each hand.

cengkok. J: Melodic patterns, subject to considerable variation, of the soft elaborating parts in Javanese gamelan.

dangdut. I: Hybrid popular music genre, combining elements Indian film music, Western rock, and other popular musics.

Dayak. Ethnonym for a large number of ethnic groups from the interior of Borneo.

dhalang/dalang. J/I+: Puppeteer in wayang, or narrator in related dramatic forms.


Electone. Electric organ manufactured by the Japanese company Yamaha.

Eurasian. People of mixed European and Asian descent.

gambang kromong. I+: Hybrid musical genre incorporating Indonesian, European, and Chinese instruments that developed in the vicinity of Batavia.

gambus. I+: Term for various types of lute, some of them closely resembling the Middle Eastern ‘ūd.

gamelan sekaten. J: Large, lower-pitched Javanese gamelan associated with the festival sekaten.

gangsingan. I+: A cylindrical top that hums as it spins.

garap. J: The way in which something, e.g. a Javanese gamelan piece, is worked out.

Gedung Kesenian. Prestigious performance venue in Jakarta.

gender. J, B: General term for metallophones with thin keys suspended by cords over a rack with tuned resonators. In Javanese gamelan also refers to gender barung, considered one of the most important instruments.
gender wayang. B: Balinese gender, used primarily to accompany wayang kulit.
gendhing. J: A general term for Javanese gamelan pieces that more specifically refers to pieces using larger-scale formal structures.
gendhing bonang. J: A Javanese gamelan piece in which only loud instruments are used, and in which bonang barung functions as the leading melodic instrument.
gendhing dolanan. J: Short Javanese gamelan pieces based on or in the style of children’s songs.
gendhing kemanak. J: Short Javanese gamelan pieces featuring elongated melodic lines accompanied by a pared-down ensemble of punctuating instruments, including two kemanak.
gerongan. J: Male chorus that sings with Javanese gamelan.
gong kebyar. B: A form of Balinese gamelan developed in the early twentieth century.
Hanoman. I+: A monkey-like Hindu god and a central character in the Ramayana epic.
IKJ. Institut Kesenian Jakarta. Jakarta Arts Institute.
jineman. J: Light and small-scale Javanese gamelan pieces featuring a melody sung by a pesindhen.
Jogja, Jogjakarta: Common name, and the more orthographically consistent spelling of the formal name, for the city Yogyakarta.
karawitan. J/I+: Javanese gamelan and vocal music, or any traditional Indonesian music. See the introduction for a more extensive discussion.
kendhang/kendang. J/I+: Term for various kinds of double-headed drum used in gamelan ensembles.
kenong. J: Javanese gamelan instrument: large but higher-register gong-chime, used to punctuate subdivisions of a gong cycle.
kentongan. I+: A log-drum sounded as an alarm
Kepatihan. J: Name of a notation system for Javanese gamelan using numbers to indicate pitch, taken from the name of a neighborhood in Solo.
ketawang. J: A relatively short formal structure used in Javanese gamelan pieces, with two phrases of eight pulses in each gong cycle.
ketuk tilu. S: Sundanese dance and music genre involving a professional female dancer-
singer who dances with male audience members, accompanied by a pared-down
ensemble, often performed by itinerant entertainers.
klenengan. J: Social and musical events involving Javanese gamelan, played on its own
rather than as accompaniment to wayang or dance.
KOKAR. Konservatori Karawitan. Conservatory of Traditional Music. Name of several
secondary-level conservatories for traditional performing arts, the first of which was
founded in Solo in 1950.
kroncong (keroncong, kerontjong). I: A hybrid Euro-American-Indonesian genre,
believed to have roots in music brought to what is now Indonesia by the Portuguese in the
16th and 17th centuries.
krupuk. I+: Deep-fried chips made from starches and other ingredients.
ladrag. J: A relatively short formal structure used in Javanese gamelan pieces, with four
phrases of eight pulses in each gong cycle.
lagu. I+: Melody.
lagu perjuangan. I: Songs of the struggle, dating from the Indonesian revolution.
lagu seriosa. I: Serious songs.
lancaran. J: Javanese gamelan pieces using small-scale formal structures, in which the
balungan is typically faster and thus more prominent (lancar = fluent, flowing).
langgam, langgam kroncong. J: Songs from the Javanized repertoire of kroncong, or in
that style, which may also be played on Javanese gamelan.
Lekra. Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat. Institute of People's Culture. Arts organization
associated with the Indonesian Communist Party.
lesung. J: A hollowed out log for hulling rice using, also used as a musical instrument.
Melayu. Ethnonym, roughly synonymous with Malay, for the primary ethnic group in
eastern Sumatra, the Malay peninsula, and coastal Borneo.
Minang, Minangkabau. Ethnonyms of the primary ethnic group in West Sumatra.
musique concrète. French: Genre of electro-acoustic music created by Pierre Schaeffer in
Paris in 1948, involving the manipulation of recorded sounds.
Nur Gora Rupa. Interdisciplinary arts festival held in 1994 at TBS, Solo.
OSJ. Orkes Simfoni Jakarta. Jakarta Symphony Orchestra, active from 1967 through the
late 1980s.

pathetan. J: Category of unmetered pieces played by soft-sounding gamelan instruments, by themselves or accompanying a dhalang or other solo vocalist.

PKM. Pekan Komponis Muda. A more or less annual festival held eight times between 1979 and 1988, and sporadically after that.

pelog. J/S: A pentatonic scale, similar in intervallic structure to mi-fa-sol-ti-do, and a heptatonic tuning system accommodating several such pentatonic scales.

penataan. J: Form developed at ASKI Solo involving novel arrangements of traditional repertoire.

pencon. J: Knobbed gong, here used to refer to horizontally-suspended and higher-pitched knobbed gongs that are typically arranged in sets as a gong-chime, such as bonang.

pendhapa. J: A pavilion-like structure, with a pyramid-shaped roof and high ceiling, supported by columns rather than walls.


PKJT. Pusat Kesenian Jawa Tengah. Central Java Center for the Arts.

priyayi. J: Traditional Javanese nobility, Dutch-educated Javanese officials, or more generally the Javanese cultural elite.

Pudjangga Baru. I: Literary magazine active from 1933 to 1942.


rebab. J/B/S: A two string bowed lute, considered a leading melodic instrument in most of the traditional Indonesian musics in which it is used.

reog Ponorogo. Traditional dance form from the Ponorogo regency in East Java, involving a lion-peacock mask.

reyong. B: A gong-chime similar to bonang used in Balinese gamelan.


saluang. Minangkabau: end-blown bamboo flute.

eysahehan. J: Informal discussion or seminar.

saron. J: Metallophone with thick slab keys that sit on a hollowed-out solid wood stand that acts as a trough resonator.

Sekaten. J: A week-long festival to celebrate the birth of the prophet Muhammad.

sendhon. J: Category of unmetered pieces similar to pathetan.

siter. J: Box zither.


slenthem. J: Gender-type metallophone, with seven keys, that typically plays the balungan.

SMIND. Sekolah Musik Indonesia. Indonesian School of Music. Secondary-level
conservatory of Western music founded in Jogja in 1950.
Solo. Common name for the city Surakarta.
STOVIA. Colonial-era school in Batavia that trained native doctors.
suling. J/B/S: General term for end-blown bamboo flutes.
suling gambuh. B: Large bamboo flute, several of which are used in the Balinese dance-drama form gambuh.
Surakarta. Formal name for the city Solo.
Taman Siswa. Native-run school system founded in the colonial era by Ki Hajar Dewantara.
tembang. I+: Sung melody.
terbang. I+: Frame drum used principally in Islamic genres.
terompet. I+: Double-reed used in various Javanese “folk” genres.
trompong. B: Lower-register gong-chime used primarily in older forms of Balinese gamelan.
teruntung. J: Small frame drum used in Javanese “folk” traditions.
TBS. Taman Budaya Surakarta, officially Taman Budaya Jawa Tengah di Surakarta.
Central Java Cultural Center in Surakarta.
TIM. Taman Ismail Marzuki. Indonesia’s effective national arts center located in Jakarta.
Torajan. Ethnonym for ethnic group from highlands of South Sulawesi.
wayang: J/B/S: General term for theatrical forms, most of which involve leather shadow puppets, and relate episodes from the Hindu epics Mahabharata and Ramayana.
wayang kulit. J/B: Wayang using leather (kulit) shadow puppets
wayang orang. I: Javanese commercial dance-drama form, based on the courtly form wayang wong, in which dancer-actors (orang = person) enact stories from wayang.
wayang padat. J/I: Condensed form of wayang kulit developed at ASKI Solo by Gendhon Humardani.
wayang wong. J: Javanese courtly dance-drama form in which dancer-actors (wong = person) enact stories from wayang.
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Abbreviations

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