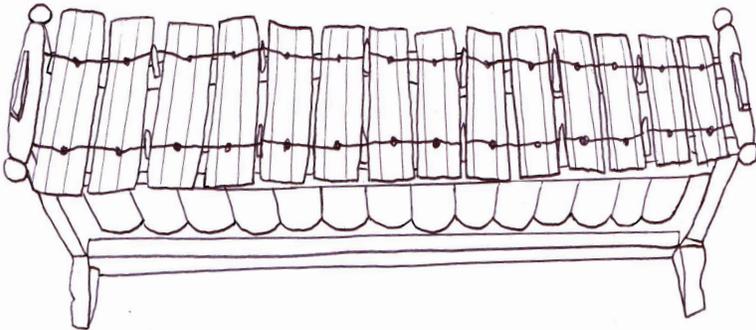


The Javanese Gender

An English Language Primer

by Sean Hayward



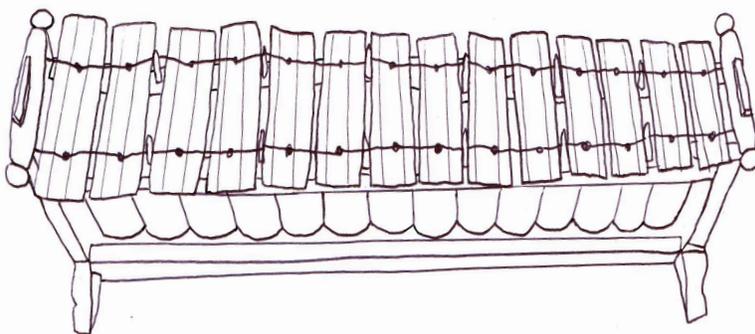
Illustrations by Vivien Sárkány

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Foreward

This primer is intended to serve as a brief introduction to the Central Javanese gender barung, one of the more complex and important instruments of the gamelan. It will focus specifically focusing on the Solonese style. When I first began learning gender, I did not speak Indonesian. Due to this, I found information about basic technique and patterns to be essentially inaccessible outside of my direct contact with my instructor. My motivation in writing this book is to hopefully relieve some of these difficulties for other students in the same position. This primer is nowhere close to a complete description of the instrument, but I hope it will be helpful nonetheless. Pursuing the serious study of gender is best approached by working directly with a Javanese musician.

THE BASICS OF GAMELAN

This book will assume some preexisting knowledge about gamelan, and this section will offer a brief review of the necessary terminology and concepts for playing the gender.

Javanese gamelan is written using cipher notation called kepatihan. The numbers 1-7 represent pitches.

1 (*siji*), 2 (*loro*), 3 (*telu*), 4 (*papat*), 5 (*lima*), 6 (*enem*), 7 (*pitu*)

These Javanese syllables in underlined italics will be used any time a tone is referred to in the text, excluding kepatihan examples. This is the common solfege practice in Java.

Dots above or below the number indicate the octave (higher and lower respectively), lines over the top of numbers divide the length of the note in half.

Rests are indicated by a dot (*pin*). These are usually not actual silences, so the previous note should allow the note to sustain. The exception: if the note on both sides of the rest is the same tone, then it should be damped for the rest.

Here is an example of kepatihan notation showing all of these elements:

$\dot{1}$ $\overline{6}$ $\overline{563}$. $\overline{1}$ $\overline{216}$

Two scales or *laras* are used. *Slendro* (5-tone) and *pelog* (7-tone). Slendro uses the numbers 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6; pelog uses 1 through 7. Within these scales exist modes or *pathet*. This refers to which tones are emphasized and what patterns, or *cengkok*, are used to approach them (this is a gross simplification of a very complex topic). This primer will focus on the most common pathet of laras slendro and will briefly discuss the process of applying this knowledge to laras pelog.

The core melody of a Javanese gamelan (known as the *balungan*) is divided into groupings of four beats known as a *gatra*. This is the basic structural unit of the gamelan, somewhat like a “measure” in western music.

Gamelan music is “end-weighted.” So the last pitch of a *gatra* serves as the strongest beat and also has the most structural importance. Elaborating instruments (such as the *gender*) design their patterns based on these “destination-tones” or *seleh*. For example, in the notation given above, the first *gatra* has a strong beat on *seleh lu*. The second *gatra* has a strong beat on *seleh nem*.

Irama does not have a direct translation in English but might be translated as “beat-division-level.” It refers to how fast the elaborating instruments play in relation to the core melody. As the *balungan* slows down, we enter a new *irama*, and the elaborating instruments fill in more of the empty space between the notes of the core melody. As the *balungan* speeds up, the opposite occurs. This will become more clear as we enter our study of specific pieces or *gendhing*.

The *gender* player uses their awareness of the current *pathet* (mode), the previous and coming *seleh* (destination tone), and *irama* (beat-division-level) to decide what patterns they should play. This process of working out one’s individual part in relation to a *balungan* (core melody) is known as *garap*.

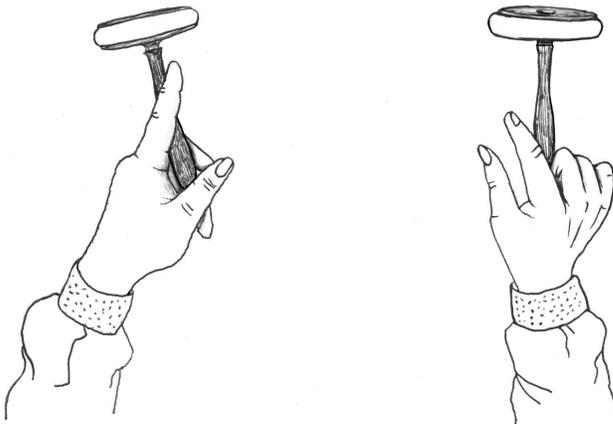


THE GENDER BARUNG

The gender is one of the elaborating, or flowering instruments of the gamelan. It does not typically take a leadership role, but rather follows the indications of the *psinden*, *rebab*, and *kendhang*.

The Javanese gender usually has fourteen keys and is played with two mallets or *tabuh*. A complete gamelan has three gender, two in different pelog pathet and one for slendro. We will assume for this primer that we are using a fourteen key instrument in slendro starting on a low 6. The player should sit with their nose approximately in line with the seventh key from the top of the instrument. On a fourteen key instrument, this will be the tone *ro*.

The technique for the two hands is slightly different. Basic playing position is shown below.



The left hand grips the tabuh with the thumb and index finger resting on top, the other fingers curled around beneath. The right hand grips the tabuh between the index and middle finger. For both hands, the position of the tabuh in the hand should remain fixed with the tip of the handle firmly positioned in the center of the palm. Horizontal and

vertical motion should come from the wrist and not from a loosened grip on the tabuh.

Notation for the gender is written on two lines with the right hand on top and the left hand on bottom. Usually, the balungan is written above.

Each tone is usually damped or muted after the next tone is played. The left hand damps with the heel of the palm when ascending and the back of the pinky and ring fingers when descending. The right hand is damped with the thumb when ascending and the bent knuckles of the pinky and ring finger when descending.

Gender is a two handed instrument, so when a gender player arrives at a *seleh*, he will be playing one of two intervals. The first is an octave or *gembyang*. The other is the interval three keys apart (often resembling a fifth), called *kempyung*. Remember there is no *pat* (4) on gender, so a *kempyung* would be the following ascending pairs: (1,5); (2,6); (3,1); (5,2); (6,3). It is very important to distinguish between these two intervals when playing gender! Some *seleh* MUST be *gembyang*, some *seleh* MUST be *kempyung*, and some might be either, at the discretion of the gender player.

The following is a more descriptive list of the basic damping techniques used for gender. Bear in mind that it is common for the two hands to be using different damping techniques as the lines are often independent. These techniques should be practiced up and down the entire length of the instrument.

Technique Mbalung

3̣ 2̣ 1̣ 6
3 2 1 6

This is, by far, the most prevalent technique when playing gender. If any of the other special techniques do not apply, revert to *mbalung*. Each tone is damped after the next tone is struck. Play 3, then after playing 2,

damp 3. Damping after the beat is one of the most difficult things to do when initially playing gender and is very important to master as soon as possible. Rarely, if the tempo is extremely fast, a tone may be damped at the same time as the next tone is struck.

Technique Samparan

$$\begin{array}{cc} \underline{\cdot \cdot \cdot 6} & \underline{\cdot \cdot \cdot 5} \\ \cdot \cdot \underline{216} & \cdot \cdot \underline{165} \\ a \dot{b} \dot{c} & a \dot{b} \dot{c} \end{array}$$

The three descending tones in the left hand are struck in sequence. Then quickly after striking *c*, *a* and *b* should be damped at the same time.



Technique Sarungan

$$\begin{array}{cc} \underline{\cdot \cdot \cdot 6} & \underline{\cdot \cdot \cdot \dot{1}} \\ \cdot \cdot \underline{356} & \cdot \cdot \underline{561} \\ a \dot{b} \dot{c} & a \dot{b} \dot{c} \end{array}$$

The same basic idea as *Samparan* but now ascending.

Technique Pipilan

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \underline{\cdot \cdot 5 6} & \underline{\dot{1} 6} & \underline{\cdot 6} & & & & \\ 2 3 & \cdot \cdot & \cdot \cdot 5 & \cdot & & & \end{array}$$

This is just like *Mbalung*, the only difference being that the overall effect should be to make the sound of a single melodic line.

Technique Genukan

$$\begin{array}{cc} \underline{6 \ \dot{1} \ \dot{2} \ \dot{1}} & \underline{5 \ 6 \ \dot{1} \ 6} \\ .321.1. & .216.6. \\ a \ b \ c \ d & a \ b \ c \ d \end{array}$$

In this pattern, *a* should be damped at the same time as striking *b*. *b* and *c* are damped together before playing *d*.

Technique Ukelan

$$\begin{array}{cc} \underline{\dot{.} \ 5 \ 6 \ \dot{1}} & \underline{\dot{.} \ 3 \ 5 \ 6} \\ 161 \ 161 & 656 \ 656 \\ a \ \dot{b} \ c \ a \ \dot{b} \ c & a \ \dot{b} \ c \ a \ \dot{b} \ c \end{array}$$

In this technique, *a* is damped at the same time as *b* is played. *b* and *c* are damped together before repeating *a*.

Technique Gugukan

$$\begin{array}{cc} \underline{5 \ 6 \ 5 \ \dot{1}} & \underline{5 \ 6 \ \dot{1} \ 6} \\ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 & \dot{6} \ \dot{6} \ \dot{6} \ \dot{6} \end{array}$$

This is used for repeated tones. Damp before the tone is repeated. Each tone will ring for half a beat.

Technique Umbaran

$$\begin{array}{cc} \underline{\dot{1} \ 3 \ \dot{1} \ 3} & \underline{6 \ 2 \ 6 \ 2} \\ \dot{3} \ \dot{3} \ \dot{3} \ \dot{3} & \dot{2} \ \dot{2} \ \dot{2} \ \dot{2} \end{array}$$

This technique is rare and won't be used until much later in studies of other forms such as *ado-ado*. The repeated tones are allowed to ring without damping.

Technique Pethetan

. 6 1 6 . 5 6 5

. 3 5 2 1 2 3 1

This is what is known in the Western percussion world as a “dead stroke.” The tabuh remains on the key after striking, not allowing the tone to resonate, but instead making a short “blip” sound.



SOME SIMPLE PIECES

The following pages contain the notation for two pieces: Ladrang Wilujeng and Ketawang Subakastawa.

The words Ladrang and Ketawang refer to the colotomic structure of the pieces. That means the length of a cycle or *gongan*, and the location of strokes by the colotomic



instruments: *kethuk*, *kempyang*, *kenong*, *kempul*, and *gong*. The *kempul*, *kenong*, and *gong* have all been marked in the balungan line. A circle around a tone indicates the big gong. An upward facing arc indicates the small gongs or *kempul* and a downward facing arc indicates the kenong. It can be quite helpful to have when playing with a full ensemble to be sure you are in the right place.

Start slow; learn one cengkok at a time and try to memorize as much as possible. Later, try to play each gongan separately. Then finally try to play the whole piece. Each step of the way, make sure you are using proper technique and try to maintain a delicate, calm sound.

Important Note:

In performance, Javanese musicians do not use any notation. Sometimes, if they haven't played the gendhing before, they might use notation for only the balungan with no gender notation. While you are playing try to memorize each cengkok, both by its name and by the *seleh* that it is used for. This memorization is absolutely necessary to continue learning the gender.

Ladrang Wilujeng - Laras Slendro, Pathet Manyura

Buka

ī . 6 . 5 6 ī ī ī . 6 5 6 ī 6
 1 3 2 6̣ 1 2 3 1 1 3 23 .216̣216̣

Transition to Dados (Ompak)

2 1 2 3 2 1 2 6̣
5 . ī . 6 5 6 ī 5 6 5 ī 5 6 ī 6 Seleh 3 (SI 3)
 . 3 . 1 2 . 2 3 1 6̣ 5 3 . 5 356̣ Tumurun (Tum)
 3 3 . . #

3 . 5 3 .5.35 6 Gantung 3, Seleh 6 (Gt 3, SI 6)
 . 3 . . 5 1 216̣

Ompak

[: 2 1 2 3
2 ī 2 6 2 3 2 ī 5 . ī . 6 5 6 ī KKP3
 . 1 2 . 6̣ . 6̣ 1 . 3 . 1 2 . 2 3
 2 1 2 6̣

6 5 6 . 6 5 6 ī 5 6 5 ī . 6 ī 6 Tum
 . . .32 1 216̣ 1 . 5 3 5 6̣ 1 2 6̣
 3 3 . .#

3 . 5 3 .5.35 3 5 6 . ī . 6 ī 6 Putut Gelut (PG)
 . 3 . 6̣5 3 3 3 . . 5 3 5 6̣ 1 216̣

6	5	3	2̂	
<u>i 2̇ i .</u>	<u>i 2̇ i 3̇</u>	<u>i 2̇ i 3̇</u>	<u>i 2̇ i 6̇</u>	PG, cont.
. . 1 2	3 . 3 .	. 1 . 6̇	. 1 . 2	
	5	6	5	3
<u>i . i 2̇</u>	<u>i 2̇ i 6̇</u>	<u>2̇ i 2̇ .</u>	<u>2̇ 3̇ 2̇ i</u>	KKP3
. 3 5 .	2 3 565	3 5 6 3	
2	1	2	6̇	
<u>6 5 6 .</u>	<u>6 5 6 i</u>	<u>5 6 5 i</u>	<u>. 6 i 6</u>	Tum
. . .32	1 216̇ 1	. 5̇ 3̇ 5̇	6̇ 1 2 6̇	
2	1	2	3	
<u>2̇ i 2̇ 6̇</u>	<u>2̇ 3̇ 2̇ i</u>	<u>5 . i .</u>	<u>6 5 6 i</u>	KKP3
. 1 2 .	6̇ . 6̇ 1	. 3 . 1	2 . 2 3	
2	1	2	(6̇)]	Back to Ompak
<u>6 5 6 .</u>	<u>6 5 6 i</u>	<u>5 6 5 i</u>	<u>. 6 i 6</u>	Tum
. . .32	1 216̇ 1	. 5̇ 3̇ 5̇	6̇ 1 2 6̇	
2	1	2	(6̇)	To Ngelik
<u>6 5 6 i</u>	<u>. 6 i 2̇</u>	<u>.3̇. 2̇ 3̇</u>	<u>. 2̇ i 6̇</u>	Duduk (Ddk)
. 2 6̇ 3	2 3 5 2	.3̇. 2 3	. 2 1 6̇	

	1	2	(6:]	
<u>5 6 5 .</u>	<u>6 5 6 i</u>	<u>5 6 . i</u>	<u>. 6 i 6</u>	Tum
. . .21	6 1 6 5 3	. 5 3 5	6 1 2 6	

WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

In Wilujeng, there is a *buka* (introduction) and three sections: 1) transition to dados, 2) ompak, and 3) ngelik. Many simple pieces are divided in this way.

- 1) Transition to Dados. During the *buka* the tempo should slow down a fair amount. When the first gong is struck, immediately jump to playing double time (twice as fast). This means you are now playing in irama *tanggung* (two gender beats for every beat of balungan). Continue slowing down throughout the first three gatra because we are still going to a new irama! As soon as you reach the end of Gt 3, Sl 6, you will again jump to double time. Now you have entered irama *dados* (four gender beats per balungan beat), where most of the piece will take place.
- 2) Ompak. After the transition, you will continue at the same place you left off in the ompak (your entrance is marked in the notation by the symbol '#'). During this first playing, we will return to the beginning of the ompak, so use Tumurun when going to the gong indicated by the circle in the balungan. Play through the entire ompak again. On this second passage, we will go to the ngelik so instead of Tumurun, play Duduk!
- 3) Ngelik. Play this directly through and then return to the ompak. From now on you will play each section only one time (ompak, ngelik, ompak, ngelik, etc.) until the kendang player gives a signal to slow down and end the piece.



APPLICATION AND TRANSPOSITION

Cengkok are usually chosen based on the previous and upcoming *seleh* (the upcoming *seleh* being substantially more important). So if you need to travel from *lu* to *nem*, in a new piece you are learning, you could borrow the cengkok *tumurun* that you already learned in Wilujeng and apply it to the new piece! Any cengkok you learn may be used in this fashion for other pieces. This is the beauty of gamelan. After a longer period of study, you can see the *balungan* of a brand new piece and realize it immediately on the *gender*!

Cengkok may also be transposed for use in other *pathet*. For example, all of the patterns of *slendro manyura* may be shifted one note down and then used in *slendro sanga*! So if we need to travel from *ji* to *ma* in *slendro sanga*, we can again use *tumurun*. On the next page is a table showing how this transposition works for some of the most common *seleh* and cengkok.

Slendro Manyura	Slenro Sanga	Cengkok
6G from 1G	5G from 6G	Tum/Ddk
6G from 2K	5G from 1K	Tum
6G from 3K	5G from 2K	Tum
6G from 6G	5G from 5G	KKG/Ddk/Gt
1G from 1G	6G from 6G	Ela Elo/Gt
1G from 2K	6G from 1K	DLC/DLB
1G from 3K	6G from 2K	DLC/DLB
1G from 6G	6G from 5G	DLC/DLB
2K from 1G	1K from 6G	JKW
2K from 2K	1K from 1K	KKP/Gt
2K from 3K	1K from 2K	JKW
2K from 6G	1K from 5G	KKP
3K from 1G	2K from 6G	KKP
3K from 2K	2K from 1K	KKP
3K from 3K	2K from 2K	KKP/Gt
3K from 6G	2K from 5G	Rambatan/KKP

*This chart is a small fraction of available cengkok, and is only a reflection of the simplest garap possible. Some cengkok are not notated in this book. You will notice that the same cengkok will be used if the upcoming seleh is the same; however, the previous cengkok will often determine what variation on that cengkok will be played! Much of this information is context dependent and should be applied with caution.

For playing in pelog modes, the same patterns can usually be used. To transfer a piece from slendro manyura to pelog barang, you can sometimes just replace *ji* with *pi* (replace 1 with 7). To transfer from slendro sanga to pelog nem, play exactly the same, but on a different instrument of course!.

In the next piece, notice which cengkok you have already learned from Wilujeng. Pay attention to the relationship of the seleh.

Ketawang Subakastawa – Laras Slendro, Pathet Sanga
a

Buka

. . . 5 . 6 2 . 2 6 2 5 . i . 6 .5.56 (5)
. . 165 . 6 2 . 2 6 2 5 . 1 . 6 5 6 165 (5)

Transition to Irama Dados (Ompak)

. 1 . 6 . 1 . 5
1 2 1 . 1 2 1 6 3 5 . 6 . 5 6 5 Ela Elo
. . 5 6 1 5 1 6 . 3 2 3 5 6 165 Tumurun (Tum)
. 1 . 6 #

1 2 1 . 1 2 1 6 Ela Elo
. . 5 6 1 5 1 6

Ompak

[: . i . 6
i 2 i . i 2 i 5 i 2 i 5 i 2 i 6 Ela Elo
. . 5 6 1 5 1 . . 5 . 1 . 5 1 6
. i . 5

5 3 5 6 . 5 6 5 3 2 3 6 . 5 6 5 Tum
. 1 5 2 1 2 3 1 6 5 3 2 3 2 3 5
. i . 6 #

i 2 i . i 2 i 5 i 2 i 5 i 2 i 6 Ela Elo
. . 5 6 1 5 1 . . 5 . 1 . 5 1 6

. i . (5:] back to Ompak

5 3 5 6 . 5 6 5 3 2 3 6 . 5 6 5 Tum
 . 1 5 2 1 2 3 1 6 5 3 2 3 2 3 5

. i . (5) to Ngelik

5 3 5 6 . 5 6 i .2. i 2 . i 6 5 Duduk (Ddk)
 . 1 5 2 1 2 3 1 .2. 1 2 . 1 6 5

Ngelik

. 2 . 1

6 i 6 . 6 i 6 2 6 i 6 2 6 i 6 5 (KKP1)
 . . 6 1 2 . 2 . . 6 5 6 1 2 3216
 . 6 . 5

. . 6 5 . .6.56 i .2. i 2 . i 6 5 Ddk
 5 5 . . 6 2 161 .2. 1 2 . 1 6 5

. 2 . 1

6 i 6 . 6 i 6 2 6 i 6 2 6 i 6 5 KKP1
 . . 6 1 2 . 2 . . 6 5 6 1 2 321

. 6 . (5)

3 2 3 .2 3 5 3 6 3 5 3 6 . 5 6 5 Tum
 . . .16 5 6 3 2 . 3 2 3 5 6 1 5

. 6 . ⑤

3 2 3 .2 3 5 3 6 3 5 3 6 . 5 6 5 Tum

. . .16 5 6 3 2 . 3 2 3 5 6 1 5

The way to proceed through Subakastawa is essentially the same as in Wilujeng (buka, transition to dados, ompak, ngelik). The only exception is that the ompak is commonly played twice for the full composition

Congratulations! In just two pieces, you have learned a substantial amount of cengkok, making it much easier to realize all of the gending you will learn in the future.

The notation you saw in the previous pages should not ever be used in real time (even for rehearsal). Instead try this. The basic notation of the balungan is written for both pieces on the next page. You should learn to play while only seeing the balungan line and then learn to play without notation whatsoever.



Ladrang Wilujeng – Laras Slendro, Pathet Manyura

Bk. 1 3 2 6̣ 1 2 3 1 1 3 2 . 1̣6̣21̣(6̣)

Ompak

2 1 2 3 2 1 2 6̣
 3 3 . . 6 5 3 2̣
 5 6 5 3 2 1 2 6̣
 2 1 2 3 2 1 2 (6̣)

Ngelik

. . 6 . i 5 i 6̣
 3 5 6 ị 6 5 3 2̣
 6 6 . . i 5 i 6̣
 1 1 3 2̣ . 1 2 (6̣)

Ketawang Subakastawa – Laras Slendro, Pathet Sanga

Ompak

. i . 6 . i . 5̣ . i . 6̣ . i . (5)

Ngelik

. 2 . 1 . 6̣ . 5̣ . 2 . 1̣ . 6̣ . (5)
 . 2 . 1 . 6̣ . 5̣ . 2 . 1̣ . 6̣ . (5)
 . 2 . 1 . 2 . 6̣ . 2 . 1̣ . 6̣ . (5)



SPECIAL PATTERNS

Most of the patterns in Wilujeng and Subakastawa are common cengkok simply used for proceeding from one seleh to the next, but some of them serve other functions.

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Gantung | These cengkok are used when the balungan hovers around a single tone. The tone might be repeated, sustained or just heavily emphasized. |
| Putut Gelut | This is a two-gatra cengkok used specifically for the balungan line seen in Wilujeng. Balungan resembling this line may also take the cengkok Putut Gelut. |
| Duduk | This cengkok is often used as an indicator to go to the next section. Typically it coincides with the rebab shifting to an upper octave passage. |
| Dua Lolo | This is an otherwise normal cengkok, but there are two varieties. "Cilik" if moving to an upper octave seleh and "Besar" if moving to a middle octave seleh. |

VARIATION, ELABORATION, IMPROVISATION

There are an enormous amount of possible variations for any given cengkok. Learning a large number of variations and then coming up with your own variations will eventually lead you to an internalized sense of the cengkok's feeling and path. As you improve, this will allow for spontaneous composition and improvisation on these patterns, while maintaining stylistic integrity. This freedom is the true mastery of the gender.

To create your own variations on the cengkok you have learned. Try this process. Take each block or unit of gender notation above, leave one hand the same while changing the path taken in the other hand. This can mean altering the rhythm, removing pitches, etc. Start simple. Variations should be tasteful and leave the feeling of the cengkok intact.

REMEMBER: the final note must remain the same. This is the core of Javanese music, the *seleh*.

For example. This is KKP1 for Slendro Sanga.

$\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 .}$ $\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 \dot{2}}$ $\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 \dot{2}}$ $\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 5}$ KKP1
. . $\dot{6}$ 1 2 . 2 . . $\dot{6}$ $\dot{5}$ $\dot{6}$ 1 2 $\overline{321}$

The first gatra may any of these rhythms instead.

$\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 .}$ $\underline{6 \dot{1} \overline{.6.}}$ $\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 .}$
. . $\overline{.61}$. . $\dot{6} \dot{1}$ $\overline{.61}$ $\overline{.61}$

Try adding rhythms of your own to the other gatra!

The following page contains some other possible variations on KKP1.

$\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 .}$ $\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 \dot{2}}$ $\underline{6 \dot{1} . \dot{2}}$ $\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 5}$ KKP1
 . . $\dot{6} 1$ $2 \dot{6} 1 5$. $\dot{6} 5 \dot{6}$ $1 2 \overline{321}$

$\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 .}$ $\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 \dot{2}}$ $\underline{6 \dot{1} . \overline{2.1}}$ $\underline{\dot{2} \dot{1} 6 5}$ KKP1
 . . $\dot{6} 1$ $2 . 2 .$. $\dot{6} 5 \dot{6}$ $1 2 3 1$

$\underline{6 \dot{1} . \overline{6.}}$ $\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 \dot{2}}$ $\underline{. \dot{1} . \dot{2}}$ $\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 5}$ KKP1
 . . $\dot{6} 1$ $\dot{6} 1 2 . 2$. $\dot{6} 5 \dot{6}$ $1 2 1 3 2 1$

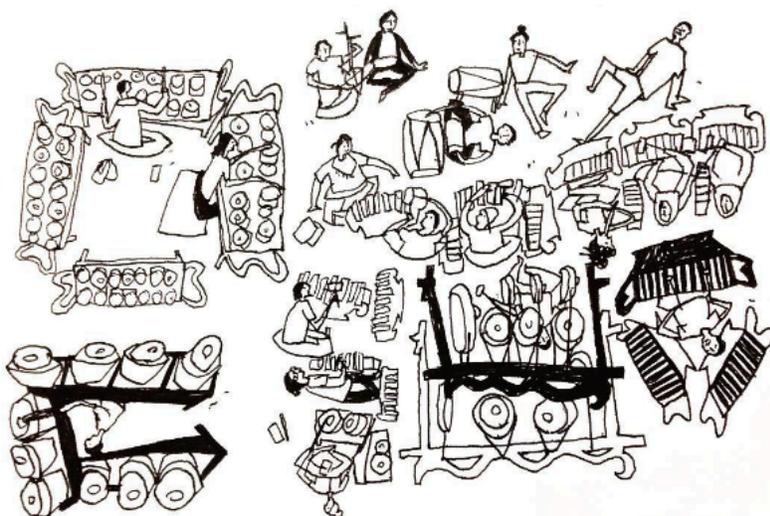
$\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 .}$ $\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 \dot{2}}$ $\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 \dot{2}}$ $\underline{6 \dot{1} 6 5}$ KKP1
 . . $\dot{6} 1$ $2 1 \dot{6} 1 5$. $\dot{6} . 5$. $\dot{6} 1 5 \dot{6} 1$

As with other forms of semi-improvisatory music, in gamelan you can do anything (as long as it remains within the extremely complex and often indescribable restrictions that we call “style,” “taste,” and “feel”). The gender does not exist in a vacuum, it is not a solo instrument. What it plays is intimately linked with all other instruments. Eventually your variations will come to reflect the so called “half-seleh” (the second note of a balungan gatra), the overall shape of the melody, and the parts played by the other elaborating instruments, especially the rebab.

The only real way to understand what is good and what is bad is through repeated exposure and immersion. Listening to real Javanese musicians and learning from them is the only way to know if the variations you devise are interesting, tasteful, and inventive; or trite, strange, and awkward.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

1. Learn and memorize cengkok in irama tanggung and dados. The most elementary pieces remain here. To give some frame of reference, the curriculum for university students of gamelan at ISI Surakarta do not proceed beyond irama dados in their first year.
2. Pay attention to the seleh and the overall path of each cengkok.
3. Begin to apply these cengkok to simple pieces such as those you have already seen in this book.
4. Learn to sing the balungan while playing the gender for each piece you have learned (the balungan should be sung using Javanese syllables *ji, ro, lu, ma, nem*).
5. Practice transposing the pieces you have learned to other pathet. Concentrate on the differences in sound and feeling between the two.
6. Begin to learn simple free(-er) rhythm introductory pieces such as *grambyangan* and *pathetan*. Notation may be found for these, but quality recordings are a much better source.
7. Learn cengkok in irama wilet and eventually rangkep.
8. Continue applying these cengkok to other gendhing.
9. This step should actually not wait so long. It should be completed as early as possible. Study with a Javanese musician and go to Java.



A LIVING TRADITION

Most of the information in this book came from my instructors at Institute Seni Indonesia Surakarta and California Institute of the Arts: Pak Bambang Sis, Pak Supardi, Pak Rudisyantoro, and Pak Djoko Walujo. Some additional material came from a variety of worksheets used to instruct students at ISI Surakarta. Any and all errors made are my own.

Central Javanese gamelan is a living tradition. By this, I mean that the practice is constantly changing, multiple interpretations of a given piece are completely acceptable, innovation and development are encouraged, and material varies widely from one teacher to another. Due to this fortunate vibrancy, much of the information in this book may change over the course of time and is only a reflection of the current practice as taught to me personally during the period between 2014 and 2016.

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

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GLOSSARY

balungan – the core melody of a gendhing

buka – the introduction or opening of a piece

cengkok – patterns played by the elaborating instruments based on a given balungan line

dados – the irama which contains four beats of elaboration per beat of balungan

garap – the process of analyzing and realizing a balungan line on an elaborating instrument

gatra – four beats of a balungan line, the basic unit of gamelan music

gembyang – an octave

gendhing – a gamelan composition; also refers to a more specific, longer form

gongan – a single cycle, the span of time between big gong strikes

grambyangan – an unmetred introductory piece, often used to get the attention of players

kempyung – the interval three tones apart (two keys with two keys in between them), often approximating a Western “fifth”

kepatihan – cipher notation used for gamelan

irama – “beat division level,” or how fast the elaborating instruments play in relation to the balungan

laras – scale, either 7-tone pelog, or 5-tone slendro

ngelik – the second section of a simple form

ompok – the first section of a simple form

pathet – mode

pathetan – free, unmeasured pieces used as a prelude or postlude, evoking the mood of the current pathet

rangkep – the irama which contains 16 beats of elaboration per beat of balungan

seleh – the destination tone or the final tone of a particular gatra, used by the elaborating instruments to design their parts

tabuh – mallet

tanggung – the irama which contains two beats of elaboration per beat of balungan

wilet – the irama which contains eight beats of elaboration per beat of balungan

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Larry Polansky – *Beginning Central Javanese Gender*

Richard Pickvance – *A Player's Guide to the Central Javanese Gamelan*

The American Gamelan Institute. Gamelan.org.

Boston Village Gamelan. gamelanbvg.com