

Arranging A Gamelan Penteng Ensemble Through Exploration and Interpretation Process

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The research is financed by Direktorat Riset dan Pengabdian Masyarakat, Kementerian Riset dan Teknologi /Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional

Abstract

An ensemble or commonly referred to as a set of *gamelan* or *barungan* (in Bali) was a collection of musical instruments consisting of various types and forms of musical instruments used to present music. The quantity, shapes, and types of instruments used was depended on the ensemble type. Setting up a *gamelan* ensemble took a long time. *gamelan* ensemble could not be formed immediately. The musical instruments in it were arranged through evolutionary changes. The type and number of instruments used had been changed with musical or aesthetic considerations, as well as functional developments, and were carried out with enthusiasm. The factors that support the formation of a *gamelan* ensemble were the needs of the community, the creativity of the artists, and the dynamics of the community. The formation of a *gamelan penteng* ensemble was a step towards creating an ensemble that was musically dominated by *penteng* instruments. The formation of *penteng gamelan* ensemble was carried out through various processes of exploration and interpretation. The exploration here related to the use of other types of instruments other than *penteng* instrument and the size of *penteng* instrument, while the interpretation was related to musical (aesthetic) considerations embodied by the type and shape of the instrument used.

Keywords: Exploration, interpretation, aesthetics, enthusiasm

Publication date: September 30th 2020

DOI: 10.7176/ADS/85-03

1. Introduction

Gamelan ensemble or music ensemble or *barungan gamelan* was a group consisting of various types, forms, and quantity of instruments that presented a piece of music or *gending*. Each type of instrument used in an ensemble has a different function, for example there were instruments that emphasized more on *balungan* or *bantang gending*, or *garap*, and there were instruments that emphasized more on maintaining rhythm. In general, the duties and functions of the instruments in the Balinese *gamelan* ensemble or *barungan* could be divided into six groups, namely the *bantang gending* instrument group, the *pepayasan*, the *pengramen*, the *penandan*, the *pesumilih*, and the *pemanis* instrument group (Sukerta, 2009: 150-193). The six groups of instruments were used in large and medium sized *gamelan* ensembles, namely ensembles that used many types of instruments such as *gamelan gong gede* ensemble, *gong kebyar*, *gong luang*, *angklung don nem*, *angklung klentangan*, *semar pegulingan saih lima*, and *semar pegulingan saih pitu*.

The size of the *gamelan* ensemble depended on the quantity and type of instrument used. The use of instruments in one ensemble ranged from one type of instrument to using various types and quantity of instruments, so that there were ensembles that were "small" and "large". The "small" ensemble used a few types and quantity of instruments, the musicians were also few in quantity. While the "large" ensemble form used a wide variety of instruments and a large quantity of instruments, which meant that there were many players involved. Whether the ensemble was "small" or "large", both of which produced the same musical or aesthetic, as in Balinese musicals, *gamelan gender wayang parwa* ensemble used one type of instrument consisting of two pieces of instrument *gender wayang pengede*. The resulting musical composition was very "complete". Likewise, *gamelan gong gede* ensemble used thirty-nine types of instruments and required sixty musicians.

The use of a complete instrument produced a "complete" composition. The decision to determine the quantity of instruments did not affect the musicality of the composition. This happened because each *gamelan* group had a different musical anatomy and aesthetic. That was the fact about the phenomenon related to the size of the *gamelan* ensemble in Bali which was very much determined by the needs of the community, in this case related to the function, aesthetic needs, the creativity of the artists, and the dynamics of the society.

The types of *gamelan* ensembles in Bali were not born immediately or formed as is witnessed today. I believed that the formation of a *gamelan* ensemble in Bali went through various processes and required a long processing time. In addition, the process of forming a *gamelan* ensemble was very costly.

2. Discussion

All *gamelan* ensembles in Bali had undergone a long formation process, because their existence was largely determined by the needs of the community, aesthetic needs, the creativity of the artists, the enthusiasm and

dynamics of the community.

In Bali there were approximately forty-three types of *gamelan* ensembles, each of which used a different quantity and different form of instruments. Regarding the formation of a *gamelan* ensemble, there were two examples of the process of arranging a *gamelan* ensemble in Bali by going through various processes including the following.

2.1. *Gamelan Gong Kebyar Ensemble*

In Sukerta's book entitled *Gong Kebyar Buleleng Perubahan dan Berkelanjutan Tradisi Gong Kebyar* (2009) it was stated that *gamelan gong kebyar* ensemble was formed through various processes, for example changing from the use of seven plates on a *gangs* instrument to ten plates (*ugal*, *pemade*, and *kantil*). Changes in the quantity of plates used took a relatively long time. In addition to changes in the use of plates, there were also additional types of instruments used. Initially, *gamelan gong kebyar* ensemble did not use *trompong* instrument and *giying* instrument, but now *gamelan gong kebyar* ensemble had used both instruments. Likewise, the process of using *bende* or *bebende* and *kempli* instruments in *gamelan gong kebyar* ensemble. Both types of instruments were used in *gamelan gong kebyar* ensemble for aesthetic reasons. This meant that *gamelan gong kebyar* ensemble presented *gong gede (lelambat)* repertoire which used *bebende* and *kempli* instruments. Therefore, all *gamelan gong kebyar* ensembles now used *bebende* and *kempli* types of instruments. Thus, *gamelan gong kebyar* ensemble now used the following types of instruments: one *trompong* instrument, three pairs of *klendang (cedugan, gupekan, and plegongan/krumpungan)*, two *giying* instruments, four *pemade* instruments, four *kantil* instruments, two *penyacah* instruments, two *jublag* instruments, two *jegogan* instruments, one *reyong* instrument, one *ceng-ceng gecek* instrument, one *kajar* instrument, one *rebab* instrument, several flutes (at least three flutes), some *cakep ceng-ceng kopyak* (at least three *cakep*), one *kempli* instrument, one *kenong* instrument, one *bebende* instrument, one *kempul* instrument, and two *bungkul gong (lanang and wadon)*. On certain occasions, *gamelan gong kebyar* ensemble sometimes used *gender rambat* instrument, because *gamelan gong kebyar* ensemble was used to present *plegongan* (music for the *Plegongan* dance).

Other changes that occurred in the *gamelan gong kebyar* ensemble were the increase in the quantity of *pemade* instruments and the increasing size of *trompong*, *barangan*, and *gong* instruments (*pencon*). In the Buleleng area, usually each *gamelan gong kebyar* group used four *pemade* instruments. After experiencing a change, each *gamelan gong kebyar* group now used six to eight *pemade* instruments. In addition to increasing the size, it also increased the thickness of the tone area used in the *trompong*, *barangan*, and *gong* instruments. The changes that occurred in *gamelan gong kebyar* ensemble North Balinese style were due to enthusiasm in the competition between groups in playing *gong kebyar*.

After discussing the formation of the *gamelan gong kebyar* ensemble above, it could be concluded that the formation of *gamelan gong kebyar* ensemble by adding the use of the quantity and types of instruments was based on the needs of society, aesthetic needs, the creativity of the artists, enthusiasm, and the dynamics that occur in the community.

2.2. *Gamelan Jegog Ensemble*

considering from its growth, the *gamelan jegog* ensemble could be said to have undergone three changes as followed. Initially, the *gamelan jegog* ensemble used the *rindik* or *tingklik* type of instrument made of wood or bamboo. Over a long period of time, the types of instruments used in the *gamelan jegog* ensemble were replaced by large bamboo materials. Even then, the type and number of instruments used were not like today, using fourteen instruments grouped into six types of instruments with details of one *jegog* instrument group, two *undir* instrument groups, two *celuluk* instrument groups, three *suir* instrument groups, three *kancil* instrument groups, and three *barangan* instrument group. The third development of *Jegog Gamelan ensemble* was the use of various types of instruments, namely *ceng-ceng gecek*, *kendang*, flute, and *tawa-tawa*. Changes in the use of materials, increasing sizes, and the addition of types of instruments in *gamelan jegog* ensemble were caused by aesthetic needs and functional development. This *gamelan* ensemble originally presented instrumental repertoire for aesthetic needs, now it was developing to present dance accompaniment repertoire.

Based on my observations, *penting* instrument could be said to have no place or was not accommodated in an ensemble that did not provide a dominant function to *penting* instrument, both quantitatively and musically. These observations reveal that there were several forms of *gamelan penting* ensemble, from small to large ensembles. Observations show that there was not yet an adequate ensemble form. So it was necessary to make a *gamelan penting* ensemble, a form of offer made to the community and its supporting artists.

Gamelan penting ensemble was one type of Balinese *gamelan* ensemble which is dominated by *penting* instrument. This dominance could be seen in the number of *penting* instruments involved in it, as well as from a musical perspective.

At first, *penting* instrument was likened to a human being or a person who did not have his own house. He was often adventurous and is often used in other types of *gamelan* ensembles, so that the musical essence of

penting instrument could not appear dominant.

My experience when doing research entitled “*Penciptaan Ensambel Gamelan Penting*” was an example that could be described. During this research activity, I tried to create a *gamelan penting* ensemble. It turns out that in making it happened, I needed to carry out various processes of exploration and interpretation, especially musical interpretation. Exploration activities in the formation of *gamelan penting* ensemble were activities related to the use of the types of instruments used in the *Gamelan penting* ensemble and interpretation activities, especially musicals, were activities related to musical matters. Exploration activities in the formation of *gamelan penting* ensemble were carried out by constantly trying to use this type of instrument. After finishing using the instrument, then an evaluation was continued which emphasized more on musical evaluation. The experiments carried out in creating *gamelan penting* ensemble as followed.

- a. I played *jublrag* instrument. It turned out that from a musical perspective, the sound of *penting* instrument did not stand out. Apart from that, the compositions with *slendro* tunes always sounded like *gamelan angklung* compositions. The experimental results made me decided not to use *jublrag* instrument already show the rhythm of the music pre-taken during the exploration below.



Exploration in playing *jublrag* instrument. The arrow indicated *jublrag* instrument
(Doc. Pande Made Sukerta. 2020)

- b. The next exploration activity was to use *tawa-tawa* instrument. In the exploration activities, it was discovered that the musicality of the *tawa-tawa* instrument sound was too prominent so that it would overpower the sound of *penting* instrument, while the desired design in this ensemble was the prominence of *penting* instrument. Based on the results of the musical evaluation, *tawa-tawa* instrument was replaced with *ketimbang* instrument. *Ketimbang* instrument was an instrument that has a plate-shaped sound source made of bamboo. The involvement of *ketimbang* instrument in processing the sound of *penting* instrument was musically very supportive. For more details, see the pictures of *tawa-tawa* and *ketimbang* instruments during the exploration activities below.



Exploration in playing *tawa-tawa* instrument. The arrow indicated *tawa-tawa* instrument
(Doc. Pande Made Sukerta. 2020)



Exploration in playing *ketimbung* instrument. The arrow indicated *ketimbung* instrument
(Doc. Pande Made Sukerta, 2020)

- c. I tried to use a *gentorag* instrument. As a result, from a musical perspective, *gentorag* did not match the sound of *penting* instrument, because both instruments had sharp sounds. So *gentorag* instrument was not suitable to be added to *gamelan penting* ensemble. *Gentorag* instrument was a collection of bells consisting of three sizes (large, medium, and small) bells made of brass which was attached by hanging on a wooden handle. The difference in the size of each of the three bell groups was relatively small. These bells made a sound by shaking them, so that each bell that was attached would jiggle and produce sound.
- d. I tried to use *titir* flute instrument, in hoped of extending the sound produced by *penting* instrument. From a musical perspective, the use of *titir* flute instrument provided many positive values. So I continued to form *gamelan penting* ensemble by including *titir* flute instrument. For more details, pay attention to the picture of *titir* flute instrument taken during the exploration activity below.



Exploration in playing *titir* flute instrument. The arrow indicated *titir* flute instrument
(Doc. Pande Made Sukerta, 2020)

3. Conclusion

Based on the results of the above discussion, it could be concluded that the creation or formation of a *gamelan* ensemble, especially *gamelan penting* ensemble, did not only involve or use the type and quantity of instruments desired or owned by the creator, but must carry out exploration activities in selecting and using the type of instrument. Next was the interpretation activity using musical considerations. Thus the formation of *gamelan* ensemble, especially *gamelan penting* ensemble, was successful after going through a process that involved several stages. The selection of the types and forms of instruments used in *gamelan* ensemble was aimed at building musical anatomy/aesthetics.

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