Pedagogy, Performance, and Community in the Transnational Balinese Traditional Performing Arts Scene

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PEDAGOGY, PERFORMANCE, AND COMMUNITY IN THE TRANSNATIONAL BALINESE TRADITIONAL PERFORMING ARTS SCENE

By

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To the teachers and the students—may we always be both.
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ABSTRACT

Gamelan music and its associated performing arts are central to the unique social structures and religious practices that define cultural life on the island of Bali, Indonesia. However, hundreds of Balinese gamelan ensembles also exist outside of the island, sustained by the collaboration of Balinese and foreign musicians, scholars, and teachers. Despite extensive scholarship on gamelan culture in Bali, little systematic scholarly attention has been paid to the Balinese performing arts within an international community, especially in terms of pedagogy. Gamelan groups—Balinese and otherwise—first came to be established in North America in conjunction with institutions of higher education and formed an early part of multicultural arts education in American universities. Conversely, Indonesian arts institutions were established in response to and are still influenced by Western educational ideas. The peregrinations of and cultural interchange between American and Balinese musician-teacher-scholars form this international community of performers and pedagogues.

This dissertation examines Balinese gamelan as a case study of transnational performing arts pedagogy. I focus on the career and community of one Balinese-American performer-teacher—I Madé Lasmawan—as a lens through which to examine social, cultural, musical, educational, and community issues that revolve around this transnational teacher-performer phenomenon. Through experiences gathered from observation, discussion, interviews, taking lessons, and playing and performing with Lasmawan and members of his community, I examine the impact that his teaching-in-travel has upon both his personal career and more broadly on his American and Balinese communities, particularly in developing international institutionalization of music culture. I then contextualize and compare Lasmawan’s world with those of others involved in Balinese performing arts education, in turn drawing conclusions about the role of this transnational pedagogical community within the broader international Balinese performing arts scene.

In that this study explores the transnational careers of Balinese musical performers, composers, and pedagogues as normative rather than exceptional, it engages current conceptions of diaspora theory, globalization, and cosmopolitanism, not only relative to the Balinese case study at hand but also more broadly in relationship to anthropology, ethnomusicology, and related disciplines. I emphasize the importance of pedagogy—specifically, within the formation and maintenance of Balinese gamelan groups that consist primarily of non-ethnic Balinese
outside of Bali—as a means for not only disseminating Balinese musical culture outside of Bali, but as influencing the pedagogy and practice of Balinese traditional music and cultures within Bali. In viewing the Balinese performing arts community as one that is in large part structurally based on pedagogical, artistic, and musical kinship lineages, I position Balinese musical teaching-learning cultures within the United States as an extension of Balinese cultural systems of maintaining musical traditions. Finally, by exploring international Balinese gamelan pedagogy in terms of relationships between the individuals involved and their institutions, I offer insights into the political and social effects of academically oriented musicians and scholars not only on the shape of their own educational systems and cultural institutions, but also on systems of cultural and artistic value that exist outside of academia at both local and international levels.
PROLOGUE

“No, no!” Shawn said, shuffling between the ceng-ceng (cymbal) players. He was a perennial undergrad and perennial gamelan player; he had been playing with the university ensemble since he had arrived about eight years before. “It goes like this!” Holding his own pair of cymbals, he played a thirteen-beat crashing pattern. The students down the line tried to repeat it. They finally locked in together, and Shawn moved on to the next set of ceng-ceng players, giving them a new rhythm that was meant to interlock with the first. Chaos. The musicians playing the other instruments hardly noticed; they were all counting to themselves, trying to keep aligned with the piece’s odd meter. Above our heads and behind our backs sat an Andean bombo, an Ugandan endongo, a monochord, some Balinese bamboo angklung, and a number of small hand percussion instruments. I felt like the instruments were watching us, judging us as we turned the Balinese gamelan beleganjur, the “gamelan of the walking warriors,” into a gamelan of confused undergraduates.¹

This was my first full semester playing in a university gamelan, in the spring of 2008. The ensemble members—a mix of complete novices and those with a few semesters of playing under their belts—had learned several traditional pieces at the beginning of the semester. Now, after long lobbying by Shawn, the director Michael Bakan had allowed this gamelan enthusiast to teach his new composition, “Beleganjur Telulas.” “Telulas” means “thirteen” in Balinese; unlike traditional beleganjur repertoire, which generally has repeating cycles of eight beats, this piece required us to play interlocking parts in a gradually shifting meter. It was different. It was hard. We eventually learned it and in Balinese beleganjur competition tradition, there was even gerak, choreography. Today, Shawn Havery—now a computer programmer—recalls it as “one of the best experiences of my life.” I remember the experiencing being fun, but I was not yet sold on gamelan. I did not yet realize the foundational role that it would come to play in my own life.

It is strange how many times I came across gamelan before I was finally and irrevocably hooked. I first encountered gamelan music during summer band camp at Florida State University at the age of twelve. Mixed in with the daily schedule of concert band rehearsals, chamber

¹ Gamelan beleganjur is a type of processional gamelan that is currently primarily used for cremation processions and competitions. The phrase “gamelan of walking warriors” refers to a now-archaic function of beleganjur: accompanying warriors into battle (Bakan 1998a).
ensemble rehearsals, and music theory classes, there was the option to take a world music ensemble class. I, there for orchestra camp later in the summer as well, took two. I studied steel pan and gamelan, the latter taught by Sabrina Rodriguez, who I would meet again thirteen years later in Bali. I still remember sitting there behind the reyong (kettle gongs), trying to coordinate my hands to what must have been one of the two basic patterns for “Baris,” the warrior dance. I remember the thrill of finally hearing the parts “lock” together for the first time—but steel pan was just as interesting. After all, in steel band, I got to dance.

In college, I ran into gamelan again, in a world music cultures elective course. I was an anthropology major at the time at the University of Chicago. We read an excerpt on Javanese gamelan from *Excursions in World Music, Fourth Edition* (Capwell 2004) and part of a book on beleganjur by an ethnomusicologist named Michael Bakan who taught at Florida State University, in my home town of Tallahassee. I supposed at the time that my mom probably knew Bakan; she had been on the music theory faculty at Florida State for over fifteen years. But there was no beleganjur at the University of Chicago; we spent one evening playing the Javanese gamelan at the Friends of the Gamelan open house in Hyde Park. The music was beautiful. But the ensemble met at an awkward time, and I became interested in the Middle Eastern group instead.

When I came to Florida State, my mind was still in the Arab world. Nonetheless, I took the required “Music of Indonesia” course and the gamelan ensemble course at the same time. Despite the instruments’ glorious wooden frames, sumptuously carved with tales from the Ramayana; despite the unique, shimmering sound of the ensemble’s kettles, gongs, and keyed metallic instruments; despite my growing understanding of how the parts interacted; despite the fun of trying to crash cymbals successfully in shifting patterns of thirteen, I was not “hooked” yet. But finally, a year later, I enrolled in gamelan ensemble again. I was twenty-two years old; what finally convinced me was watching the dancer.

She was the wife of a Ph.D. student in Education who had been directed to Bakan through mutual acquaintances. Newly arrived in the United States that fall, she came to dance in front of the gamelan class one day early in the semester. Her costume, in brilliant hues of pink and green and gold, shimmered even under the rehearsal room’s florescent lights. The precision with which she moved her arms, her hands, her head, her eyes—it pulled me in; I was stunned, speechless. I knew that I had to study with her, had to learn this dance and this music, and so it
began—I spent five hours a week in gamelan rehearsal and four hours a week with her, trying to learn to be graceful. Her name was I Gusti Ayu Candra Dewi—or in the United States, simply Candra. She was not a professional, but an amateur, and (as I learned later) had no substantial teaching experience before coming to the United States. Yet she taught and we learned to keep our backs arched, our arms up, our hip movements graceful, and for heaven’s sake, to smile. We learned to “move like dancers, not soldiers,” to be seksi, to become women, Balinese-style.

Gamelan music by itself had been to me an abstract, intellectualized practice that hinged on the complex interlocking of a dizzying array of patterns; dance embodied these patterns, pointing out what was important about the music and the culture. The more I danced, the more I came to love the music. It was mutually reinforcing. I was hooked.

But the more I studied, the more I wondered: what did it mean for Candra to be here in America? What elements of Bali—cultural, religious, artistic—did she maintain in her daily life? What had she left behind in Jakarta? How did she decide what and how to teach? How was her experience influencing us, and how did we influence her? Armed with American teaching experience, what impact would she make when she returned home? And she was just one example. Florida State University, home to the only active Balinese gamelan for almost a thousand miles, was relatively isolated from other pockets of Indonesian culture, despite its periodic history of hosting guest artists such as I Ketut Gedé Asnawa, I Nyoman Wenten, and I Nyoman Sedana. However, I additionally knew that all over the United States there were Balinese dancers and gamelan teachers in similar positions, ones even more involved long-term in music pedagogy for foreigners.

To further investigate my growing interest in Balinese performing arts culture, I took my first trip to Bali in 2010 where I spent five weeks studying at “gamelan camp” with Gamelan Çudamani, one of Bali’s foremost sanggars (private ensemble groups). Ideas about Balinese pedagogy for foreigners swirled in my head, but it was not until my second trip to Bali in 2011 that I took that I realized that this was indeed a topic worth pursuing, and that the academic angle—almost a reflexive study—was what interested me as a prospective dissertation topic. Having skipped over on this visit to Bali as a brief weekend vacation from Indonesian language

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2 In this dissertation, unless specified otherwise, “America” is meant to indicate “of the United States.” Although there are active Balinese gamelans across the world, including in Canada, Mexico, and other parts of the Americas, I restrict my case study to the United States in order to situate my story within a more cohesive historical, social, and educational framework.
study in Malang, Java, I found myself moving further beyond the cultural façade that I had experienced in the Ubud-Pengosekan area, and I got my first glimpse of the academic U.S.-Bali pedagogical connection.

I spent the first half of that weekend in July 2011 with Candra’s extended family outside of Kuta village in the south of Bali. After visiting for a few days and helping the women prepare offerings for the concurrent holiday—the festival of Galungan, and then Kuningan day, on which the Balinese believe their deified ancestors return temporarily to the earthly realm of Bali—I decided to set off for a small village, Bangah, in the central mountains of Tabanan. An American friend from my language program, Ian Rowen, was staying at the home compound of the teacher with whom he studied gamelan in Colorado, I Madé Lasmawan. Lasmawan supposedly had a number of gamelans and students up there in the mountains. I had been invited to come and join in, to stay and play with them.

Despite the busyness of Kuningan, Candra’s family drove me out to rent a motorbike in Ubud. Waving goodbye to my gracious hosts of the last two days, I walked into the small travel agency and surprised them with my request, in Indonesian, to rent a moped. I got two helmets—Ian would be riding back into town with me—and leveraged myself and my gear onto the tiny vehicle.

Although I was technically licensed to drive a motorcycle in the U.S., that license had been acquired in a one-weekend crash-course a mere two months earlier. I had only once ridden one of these tiny automatic sepeda motor that are popular in Indonesia and never for anything as substantial as an hour-long journey. I fumbled nervously with the directions I had scribbled down from Google Maps. They didn’t take me all the way to Bangah; despite the tech empire’s attention to detail, the village was still “off the map” and the nearest that my trusty Google could get me was to Baturiti, the next large town over. Even that route would take over thirty turns to navigate. I exhaled slowly, put my key into the ignition, and started the engine.

The tourist areas in Bali are difficult to navigate by vehicle and Ubud was no exception, with its combination of small streets, oblivious foreign pedestrians and motorbike riders, and confident locals. Still, I made it out onto the open road. It was a glorious clear day with an endlessly blue sky and soon I was flying past the verdant rice paddies with kites playing in the breeze above them, the adjacent knobbly old trees decorated with checkered cloths signifying the residence of a revered spirit at that location.
Through the outskirts of Ubud, I was somewhat able to follow my handwritten directions, only getting turned around once or twice. But then, the roads became harder and harder to find; it was difficult to determine what constituted a road and what was only a side-street or alleyway. Only large towns like Ubud had directional signs; most streets had no road signs at all. Twenty minutes out from the town, while cruising down a particularly steep hill somewhere on what must have been Jalan Raya Tunon, my carefully written set of directions fluttered from my right hand like one of so many kites in the breeze. I hesitated and almost pulled over to a stop. Did I need the directions? I already had to double-guess every turn that I made; the written model did not correspond well to the Balinese reality.

I shook my head. No. With one month of Indonesian language training under my belt, it would be faster to just stop and ask. And I did—at each of those thirty turns.

While the countryside was fairly empty, the streets of each tiny desa, or village, were teeming with activity for the holiday. Once, I had to stop entirely for a ceremony in a village crossroads, where women were giving offerings in preparation for the dance of the barong, a mystical figure who protects Balinese civilization from the dangerous forces of the wilderness. After the ceremony was completed, I drove past—then had to stop, and stop, and stop again to ask directions.

In one village, I pulled into the street at too sharp an angle. My gear had shifted and the bike was unbalanced. I wobbled past some children and roosters in the street before toppling over, bags and motorbike and all. Bystanders rushed over to help me. Embarrassed, I assured them that I was all right despite bleeding from several scratches and scrapes, including a torn-open elbow that has a scar to this day. A kind family on a motorbike—husband, wife, and two children—indicated that they too were heading towards Baturiti and that I was welcome to follow them. I gladly accepted, rebalanced myself and my baggage, and motored on.

The terrain gradually became steeper, the landscape more forested, the air cooler. Right before reaching Baturiti, the man who I was following gestured off to the left, to a small side road whose only real sign read “air panas”—pointing towards the hot springs that I had heard existed near Lasmawan’s village. I turned left, following the road as it curved past a small

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3 Although “desa” might be best translated as “village,” it is one of several words within Indonesian that might best translate as “village” in English. The desa is distinct from the kelurahan (urban village) primarily by its rural status. A desa contains its own local government that governs the desa’s affairs, but is subordinate to other regional forms of government.
housing complex, by more rice paddies, into the woods and out, passing a small toko (snack vendor shop) before descending once more. I almost flew past my proposed destination, but several Balinese men in their twenties raced out of the gate and waved me down. Weary but full of adrenaline, I pulled past the two guardian statues at the front, through the tall front gates, and parked my motor just inside the family compound.

The first thing that I noticed was the music. There was a gamelan, gong kebyar, being played somewhere within the compound. It didn’t take me long to identify the source of the sound. I was led through the compound’s open-air courtyards past a number of balé, the raised covered pavilions that constitute rooms in a Balinese house. We walked past the balé for rice storage, the family temple, the guest quarters, and finally past a stage—an unusual feature in Balinese housing upon which nearly twenty mostly-young American and Balinese musicians were playing.

Dropping my bags at the last building—an additional, yet-unfinished set of guest quarters—I walked back the few yards towards the stage. Climbing the stairs, I tried to sit out of the way at the corner of the group to observe. At a break in the music, a middle-aged man who I later found out was Lasmawan himself greeted me and motioned me over to play gangsa (a small keyed metallophone), which renders the quickest part elaborating on the core melody of a gong kebyar piece. The piece was a kreasi baru-style composition (new composition in a traditional format) by one of Lasmawan’s summer students, Tyler Yamin, who had come here for yet another summer for intensive gamelan studies. I followed the gangsa players who knew the part, hands flying, mind racing, trying to remember all of the angsel, or cadential cueing patterns, as they came around for the second time.

It had taken me at least twice as long as a local and over twice the optimistic time estimate that I had received from Google Maps, but I had made it to the village, to the compound. Having arrived less than ten minutes before, I had already become immersed in the music that I was studying, myself and my part locking into this musical community that mixed foreigners and locals, the old and the new. I had traveled so far and yet in some ways, I felt myself to be at home.

Although the lifeblood of Balinese gamelan traditions flows through small villages like Bangah—communities of farmers, off the map, who maintain gamelan music for ritual occasions and personal entertainment—its reach and influence have spread far beyond the shores of Bali.
There are Balinese gamelans in other parts of Indonesia, in Japan, in Australia, in Europe, and many in North America, all connected to each other through shared performers, repertoire, aesthetics, goals, and experience. While local talent, influences, and aspirations all shape the distinct Balinese gamelan sub-communities around the world, it is a broader picture that I seek to illuminate in this dissertation—how the music and ideas of Balinese gamelan communities are carries across the globe to create a larger community that reflects, informs, challenges, and reinforces Balinese musical and cultural ideals.

This is a story of journeys: the Balinese musician-scholar-teachers who “live-in-travel” (Geertz 1997), traversing thousands of miles every year to complete their personal and professional obligations. This is also a story of stops and scrapes, personal and professional, in the lives of these teachers and their students and how such “bumps in the road” have lead them to the people and communities that mattered the most. Finally, this is the story of letting the written directions fly away; of letting go of the set paths; of taking chances and asking questions and finally making it home.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION TO THE TRANSNATIONAL BALINESE
GAMELAN PERFORMING ARTS SCENE

Bangah, Bali, Indonesia, June 2012

It is sprinkling, again. It always seems to rain for temple ceremonies in the mountains, especially in the small village of Bangah, in Tabanan province, just south of Baturiti. I am perched on the edge of the covered balé, trying to stay out of the rain and out of the way of the women, who are carrying large square baskets of offerings that are balanced on their heads and secured with only one hand. I squirm in my kamben (batik wrap skirt), which is still bunched oddly from catching a ride through the village on the back of a motorcycle, and wish that I too could look as elegant as some of the women did in their lace kebayas (elegant dress shirts). Children run between the thatched red-brick temple structures, laughing, seemingly heedless of the mud or the cluster of men who appear to be preparing for the group prayer just behind the next low wall in the inner temple sanctuary. Other men are outside the other walls, eating roasted pork or shouting as they gamble on dice games and the cock fight, while others are approaching the balé containing the gamelan, a gamelan angklung. A few bulé—white foreigners—mill about as well; they are students of Lasmawan’s. The scene is ramé—the Balinese aesthetic term used to describe the loud, boisterous clamor of such an event—and deciding to where to go, who to talk to, what to watch seems a daunting task. I keep my eye on the gamelan.

Maybe after a few minutes, maybe after half an hour, the gamelan players—all men from the village, ranging in age from early twenties to mid-forties—coalesce behind the gamelan, still chatting and receiving tea. They almost match each other in their white shirts and udeng (Balinese hats) preferred for this type of temple ceremony—but not quite; subtle variations indicate differences in budget and personal taste. With no particular announcement to the other worshippers, they pick up their mallets and begin to play. Around me, most people continue what they were doing; the village gamelan group, while a crucial part of the temple ceremony, is a fairly pedestrian sight.
Later in the evening, the village women’s group takes the stage. Although there have been women’s groups off and on throughout the village’s history, a decade has passed since a stable group has existed in the village. Now, after practicing for a month, the women take up their mallets for their first public performance. They play slowly relative to the men’s group and are missing notes, but many smile, clearly proud at being able to play for the community. Although maybe not up to the standards of the competition performances at the Bali Arts Festival, this performance is for ngayah, presented as service to the temple, and no one is going to begrudge a few missed notes. A crowd begins to gather in front of the women musicians to watch. Younger children especially press close; despite hearing gamelan several times a week as the groups in the village practice, watching the women perform is a novelty. A faster piece begins and their eyes shine in delight as they soak in the sound and watch their mothers’ hands begin to fly.

Tallahassee, Florida, February 2013

Thursday afternoon, 3:10 pm, and I am running late to practice, again. Usually I would not worry—the Indonesian principle of jam karet, “rubber time,” applies to some extent even with our university gamelan. However, today I am teaching the group a new section of “Cendrawasih,” a piece of which I had accumulated bits and pieces from various people throughout Bali—the core and elaborated melodies I learned from Lasmawan; the kendang (drum) parts, from Kadek, my young drumming teacher in Denpasar; the dance, from Ni Wayan Seniasih, the wife of the head of pedalangan (puppetry) at the conservatory in Denpasar. Some musical parts (reyong) are almost never written out; these parts I had just finished transcribing the day before, and I am a little nervous to teach them, having not yet been able to proofread my work. I run out the front door, hop into my Mini Cooper, and zoom through the narrow, empty residential streets on this clear spring day. I get caught at the traffic light in front of St. John’s Episcopal Church. As I wait, I glance over at the statue of a saint who gazes up serenely at the red brick church walls, framed by the curtain of Spanish moss hanging from the ancient

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4 Indonesian conceptions of clock time are often flexible. Community events tend to start whenever all of the required community members have gathered, which tends to be five minutes to a few hours after the announced time. This concept is referred to as jam karet.

5 In this dissertation, I will be following Balinese orthography for musical instruments and terms (as opposed to the Javanese orthography) unless the term is used within a Javanese gamelan context. The two most obvious manifestations of this spelling are “kendang” instead of “kendhang” and “dalang” (puppeteer) instead of “dhalang.”
churcyard oaks. Although generally not the praying kind, I send out a wish for a small piece of that serenity. The light turns green. I drive.

Pulling onto the fourth floor of the parking garage, I race down the stairs, down and across the street, and enter the red brick building, running up another set of stairs to the second floor. Turning right after passing the College of Music main office, I am greeted by the sight of approximately sixteen pairs of high heels, tennis shoes, and flip-flops lined neatly in the hallway against the wall. I can hear voices chatting and tiny bits of kotekan (interlocking patterns) wafting from the door—a gangsa player is already practicing the part we worked on last time.

As I enter the room, I am greeted by several people. I smile; 3:28 pm and they have already pushed back the Ghanaian drums that have occupied the room for the last week and pulled out the gamelan gong kebyar, each instrument carefully placed in the tight space. It was time to start—did I have everything? Earplugs?—check. New scores, the ones transcribed in a mix of Western and cipher notation?—check. I step to the front and look out over the class. It’s a mixed bunch. Their light to dark complexions reveal a number of different ethnic heritages. They are male and female, teenagers to middle aged adults, punks, geeks, athletes—and for one semester at least, gamelan musicians. I sit down, tap a few times on the kendang, and everyone falls quiet. I say, “C’mon, y’all, let’s get started.”

Colorado Springs, Colorado, May 2013

The snow had melted the day before, leaving only a hazy white shadow on Pike’s Peak and the other mountains visible in the distance beyond the square, gray, modernist performing arts center. The melting of the snow was auspicious; the musicians, Balinese and American alike, agreed that snow would have offered a less than optimal backdrop for a festival of the Balinese performing arts! It was tea break, and students and adults from different universities and colleges—color-coded by their groups’ matching tee-shirts or traditional Indonesian dress—milled around the hallways, laughing, talking, and drinking tea or coffee. Others were shepherding in yet more sets of gamelan to fit on the stage or in the hallway. Onstage, a smaller group was checking on the instruments for a new composition—a piece combining instruments from gender wayang (a small ensemble used to accompany shadow puppetry) and beleganjur as well as rebab (fiddle) with bowed piano. Outside, several of the eminent male Balinese-American musicians were taking a break to smoke and talk—I Nyoman Suadin, laughing, with his
explosive, curly, long black hair and tight, faded rock star jeans; I Nyoman Saptanyana, looking very “New York City” in his black, square-rimmed glasses as he reacts to Suadin’s joke; I Ketut Gede Asnawa, always more reserved, smiling and looking on. Not immediately implicated in any of the preparations, I wandered from scene to scene in this tiny microcosm of Balinese-American performance life. Finally I stopped, transfixed; Putu (Lasmawan’s eldest son) and I Gusti Ngurah Kertayuda (dance director for the Indonesian consulate in Chicago) were practicing the dancing of the barong in the hallway. The barong, whose bodily shape and corresponding costume was probably derived from the Chinese dragons, is danced by two people—but one almost never sees a barong danced outside of ritual contexts. Here, the two men became the barong ket, its beard waggling first towards the rack of costumes, then towards the small crowd assembled to watch this strange occurrence.

Soon enough, it was time for more rehearsals to begin. The assembled groups rotated through their rehearsals on the stage. The players and dancers were mostly from colleges and communities all over the Rockies, but members of Lasmawan’s family or artists from the broader Balinese-American musical community filled in the gaps. They chatted in English and Balinese between pieces, but after the initial kendang stroke indicating that a piece was about to start, it was all business. The musicians were of Anglo and Asian descent, American and Balinese, old and young, urban and rural. Some had never visited Bali; some had lived there for almost their whole lives. Some had played gamelan for over fifty years, some for just a few months. But there was a place for them all. They were recreating a musical experience that originated on a tiny island half the world away; yet, now it was also now an American experience.

The ability to travel through time and space is a concept that has long fascinated humanity. The oldest known story of time travel derives from the Hindu epics, written over 5,000 years ago. It is the story of King Kakudmi (also called Raivata) and his daughter, Revati. The father and daughter traveled to the kingdom of the Creator, Lord Brahma, to ask advice about which suitor was worthy to be married to Revati. But Brahma was listening to a musical performance by the Gandharvas—musically gifted male nature spirits—and only saw his visitors after what seemed to the travelers to be a short while later, after the performance was finished. When Kakudmi subsequently presented his list of suitor candidates to Brahma, the Creator laughed. Time passed much differently in Brahma-loka than on Earth; the king and his daughter
would return home to find that 108 yugas, or Ages of Man, had passed on earth. Although at Brahma’s suggestion Revati was married off appropriately, both the king and his daughter were shocked at how listening to that music, being in that place, had altered their conceptions of time and space; how different everything was when they returned home.

Today, technology—the airplane, the cell phone, and the internet—has enabled humans to experience their own time and space travel: maybe not to the Brahma-loka, but across the world to places where time and space function in a vastly different manner than at “home.” In the stories, music, too, is often told to have a transformative power, one that can alter perceptions of time and space, if not transcend these distances entirely. While the Kakudmi story does not seem to be among the many tales from the Indian Hindu epics that have become well-known in Bali, its central themes of the relativity of time and space and the ability of music to transcend these boundaries resonates with many themes of musical life in Bali and the vast expansion of the Balinese performing arts outside of the island itself.

In Balinese Hindu social life, conceptions of time and space are exceptionally important. Each village is oriented with its holiest buildings erected in the part of the village closest to Gunung Agung—the great mountain at the center of the island, pointing skyward towards the land of the gods—while its least holy areas are those most proximal to the sea, where the demons are said to reside. Each house, each temple is oriented in a similar vein. Each person, too, is considered to have a proper orientation, with the head being most pure and the feet, the most unclean. Conceptions of time, too, govern religious life; important events revolve around the complex intersections of two different religious calendars, the pawukon and the saka (Eiseman 1990). The Gregorian calendar, a recent addition to Balinese life, plays only a minor role in the structuring of society: governing the opening and closing of banks and governmental offices. Bali still functions primarily on ritual space and ritual time, in which each person has a role to play within the structure of society.

This concept of an individual’s role as appropriate to the place, time, and situation has been popularly glossed in Bali as “desa, kala, patra,” which literally means “village, time, fitting/appropriate (in regards to a person).” According to Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia, the most prominent national Hindu organization and formal authority in Indonesia, this phrase refers back to core Vedic scriptures and governs implementing the central religious, Vedic truths (tattwa) through differing cultural practices of Hinduism (Wakya 2011). In popular Hinduism,
however, the words tend to be used more individualistically—in terms of a person fulfilling the correct role within a certain time, place, and situation—or more broadly in looking at Bali’s cultural role within the world more broadly. The 2011 theme for the Pesta Kesenian Budaya (abbreviated PKB; the Bali Arts Festival), Bali’s prominent annual festival of performing arts culture, was “Desa Kala Patra (Adaptasi Diri Dalam Multikultur)—appropriately adapting the Balinese artistic self in the face of multiculturalism.

Historically, Balinese performing arts culture was never truly isolated from the outside world. Continuing contact with the Javanese and other pre-Indonesian cultures, with the Chinese, the Dutch, and other entities, has shaped the last thousand years of Balinese social and cultural history. However, in the twentieth century, mass media and the increasing ease of travel have forged new links between Bali and the rest of the world. As more foreign visitors came to Bali, more Balinese people and culture also left the island, forming “hotspots” of Balinese culture around the world, many of them centered around Bali’s most prevalent type of musical ensemble, the gamelan. Although the widespread movement of people has been common around the world for the last hundred years and indeed, there are many populations in diaspora that are much larger in number of individuals, the Balinese performing arts provide an interesting case study through which to examine the relationship of music, mobility, and community. First, since Balinese culture is so tied to the geography of the island—all important religious ritual events must occur within that context—how does a Balinese person maintain and represent this culture outside the island’s confines? Second, since this international cultural spread is centered so much on the embrace of the Balinese performing arts by foreign individuals rather than the mass movement of ethnic Balinese, why and how is this culture embraced by foreigners, and how has the embrace of Balinese traditional performing arts cultures abroad shaped musical-social practices in Bali? Third, how does the change in place, time, and situation of Balinese gamelan culture alter its form, meaning, and importance?

The three vignettes above are intended to briefly demonstrate the geographic range and contextual diversity of Balinese gamelan groups internationally. Drawn from my fieldwork experiences, these places represent only a small sample of the locations that now house active Balinese gamelans and the communities that have grown around them. From a tiny village in Bali to New York City, from a small town in Montana to Vancouver, Tokyo, and Sydney, the performance culture of this one tiny island has spread to cities and towns across the world,
creating microcosms of Balinese gamelan culture. One small segment of this web of connections—the academic-educational exchange of musical and cultural ideas between the United States and Bali—is what this dissertation illuminates.

1.1 Focus of the Study

Gamelan music and its associated performing arts are central to the unique social structures and religious practices that define cultural life on the island of Bali, Indonesia. However, hundreds of Balinese gamelan ensembles also exist outside of the island, sustained by the collaboration of Balinese and foreign musicians, scholars, and teachers. Despite extensive scholarship on gamelan culture in Bali, little systematic scholarly attention has been paid to the Balinese performing arts within an international community, especially in terms of pedagogy. Gamelan groups—Balinese and otherwise—first came to be established in North America in conjunction with institutions of higher education and formed an early part of multicultural arts education in North American universities. Conversely, Indonesian arts institutions were established in response to and are still influenced by Western educational ideas. The peregrinations of and cultural interchange between North American and Balinese musician-teacher-scholars form this international community of performers and pedagogues.

This dissertation examines Balinese gamelan as a case study of transnational performing arts pedagogy. I focus on the career and community of one Balinese-American performer-teacher—I Madé Lasmawan—as a lens through which to examine social, cultural, musical, educational, and community issues that revolve around this transnational teacher-performer phenomenon. Through experiences gathered from observation, discussion, interviews, taking lessons, and playing and performing with Lasmawan and members of his community, I examine the impact that his transient pattern of living has upon both his personal career and more broadly on his American and Balinese communities, particularly in developing international institutionalization of music culture. I then contextualize and compare Lasmawan’s world with those of others involved in Balinese performing arts education, in turn drawing conclusions about the role of this transnational pedagogical community within the broader international Balinese performing arts scene.

I approach this study from a reverse telescoping perspective. I have taken I Madé Lasmawan, a professionally prolific Balinese musician-teacher, as the most detailed focus of my
study. I then expand outwards to contextualize his experiences within his immediate community of students and colleagues, then the broader gamelan educational systems of Bali and the United States as a whole. I apply kinship-oriented and geographically oriented approaches in this research, providing a unique perspective from which to analyze current and historical influences of Balinese artistic communities on international, regional, institutional, and personal scales.

In that this study explores the transnational careers of Balinese musical performers, composers, and pedagogues as normative rather than exceptional, it challenges current conceptions of diaspora theory, globalization, and cosmopolitanism, not only relative to the Balinese case study at hand but also more broadly in relationship to anthropology, ethnomusicology, and related disciplines. I emphasize the importance of pedagogy—specifically, within the formation and maintenance of Balinese gamelan groups that consist primarily of non-ethnic Balinese outside of Bali—as a means for not only disseminating Balinese musical culture outside of Bali, but as influencing the pedagogy and practice of Balinese traditional music and cultures within Bali. In viewing the Balinese performing arts community as one that is in large part structurally based on pedagogical, artistic, and musical kinship lineages, I position Balinese musical teaching-learning cultures within the United States as an extension of Balinese cultural systems of maintaining musical traditions. Finally, by exploring international Balinese gamelan pedagogy in terms of relationships between the individuals involved and their institutions, I offer insights into the political and social effects of academically oriented musicians and scholars not only on the shape of their own educational systems and cultural institutions, but also on systems of cultural and artistic value that exist outside of academia at both local and international levels.

Although there are many facets of the transnational Balinese performing arts that I could use as a focus of my study, I primarily explore this scene from the perspective of education, particularly institutions of higher education. Community-based and professional groups in Bali and in America are central to this broader network of performing artists and indeed, form an ecosystem in which university and community groups play symbiotic roles. However, it is in conjunction with institutions of higher education that Balinese gamelan groups first came to be established in North America, and they continue to be centers of Balinese artistic activity and teaching. Conversely, Indonesian arts institutions—conservatories, festivals, etc.—are influenced by Western educational ideas, with many leaders in Balinese arts education having studied extensively in North America. To the extent that I discuss community-based groups, it is to
illuminate how they interact within the same ecosystems as academically based groups, and to more fully document how patterns of travel and cultural interchange between North American and Balinese musician-teacher-scholars serve to shape not only their own lives, but also form larger communities that are deeply interconnected.

In looking at the Balinese “traditional” performing arts, it is not my intent to discount the importance of global networks of Balinese avant-garde music, popular music styles, or other experimental artistic forms. These other musical styles form an important core of Indonesia's artistic identity on an international scale, but are less often taught outside of Indonesia within institutional settings than the traditional performing arts. In this discussion, I conceive of tradition in two ways. First, tradition is that which a group or society conceives of as being traditional—an object or practice that, through its perceived centrality to specific conceptions of history and culture, becomes an important facet of that culture’s identity as determined by individuals within that culture, an “authentic” aspect of that particular culture. To add nuance to this first definition with a second—tradition can also be viewed as “a process of creative transformation whose most remarkable feature is the continuity it nurtures and sustains” (Bakan 2012: 29). The first definition recognizes a community’s agency in determining the principles and practices, historical and cultural, which define the core elements of their culture; the second frames these traditional principles and practices dialectically, in a continuous process of redefinition by individuals, groups, and entire communities and societies to fit their own circumstances.

A second concept, sincerity, can illuminate a further facet of the notion of “realness” as it concerns Balinese culture. In John L. Jackson’s Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity (2005), he documents the residents of Harlem, New York City, as they search for “the real” in terms of racial expression. Arguing that the concept of “authenticity” has been used to trap individuals within cultural stereotypes because it describes the relationship between people and the cultural objects that they deem to be authentic, Jackson posits “sincerity” instead to examine these real relationships between people. In terms of Balinese culture, much attention has been paid to the subject of the “authentic” Bali by researchers, performers, and those working in the Balinese tourist industry. However, an examination of sincerity—which here might be conceived of as the communication of the perceived authentic between people—adds nuance to the idea of authenticity as something that is not only presented in an event-as-object, but the relationship
between people within this event. The overlap and tensions between these definitions convey the most crucial facet of this intercultural study: how concepts held dear to an individual or group’s identity and personal/professional practice may develop and grow in different circumstances.

The core of this dissertation is a biography of Lasmawan himself. The choice to organize my work biographically was one intended to emphasize the role of the individual teacher in shaping larger gamelan communities, to provide a feasible case study for a dissertation-length project, and to exemplify broader trends within the transnational Balinese gamelan pedagogical world. Biographies are generally written about exceptional and broadly well-known individuals; while Lasmawan is not a “hero” in the classic sense, his life and work are exceptional among his musician-teacher peers in the complexity and longevity of the transnational communities that he has created and maintains. However, in another sense, different facets of Lasmawan’s career—his studies, his early teaching career in Java, the way that he instructs ensembles in the United States, the way that he hosts study abroad students—are all emblematic of how other musician-teachers work within their own transnational communities.

Although biography has traditionally been more favored as a theoretical approach in historical rather than ethnographic studies of music (Nettl 2005: 172-183), examining one individual as a representative of a broader societal system allows not only for the analysis of a single case study, but also serves as a method of understanding more widespread cultural currents. On the one hand, my study aims to present the Balinese traditional gamelan world as an interrelated system comprised of individuals and institutions, teachers and students, performers and audiences that interpret certain repertoires of musical and cultural concepts for different geographical and temporal situations. On the other hand, I also aim to give ethnographic perspectives on how these interrelated musical and cultural systems shape the lives of individuals, bringing them personal and professional opportunities, challenges, and senses of achievement. To strike this balance, I compare Lasmawan’s story with vignettes from the lives of many other musicians, teachers, and students, both Balinese and not, framing these stories with historical and structural analyses of Balinese and American individuals and institutions. This comparison allows me to explore ways in which Lasmawan and his career both exemplify and expand upon typical roles of international Balinese musician-teachers and their approaches to both American and Indonesian institutions.
Although foreigners who instruct non-native musicians in foreign musical styles within foreign contexts have long been considered to be “culture bearers” (Solís 2004)—according to the *Collins Dictionary of Sociology*, “any individual, especially a migrant, who carries, and thus diffuses, cultural values and traits between societies”—I argue instead that looking at Balinese gamelan pedagogical culture through this systematic, transnational perspective insists on a new paradigm for understanding the relationships between individuals, institutions, and the cultural information passed between them. Instead of a diffusive model for the transmission of culture, I instead posit one of active engagement in which learners as well as teachers play a significant role in the dialogic creation of culture.

1.2 Background and Historical Overview

The multinational, multicultural, and polyvocal nature of this study requires the contextualization and overview of vastly different places, times, and situations in which this larger story unfolds. First, I give a brief history and cultural overview of Bali in order to familiarize the reader with the cultural world into which we will be entering. In contrast to the island’s portrayal in much classic literature, I highlight Bali’s historic and cultural connections to the outside world. Next, I contextualize Balinese gamelan music and its affiliated performing arts within Balinese society, current and historical. Afterwards, I discuss foreign interest in gamelan culture abroad, focusing on its place in the history of the development of North American ethnomusicology, world music performance, and world music pedagogical traditions. Finally, I conclude with a systematic overview of community member “archetypes” and geographical locations important to the North American-Balinese segment of the transnational gamelan community.

1.2.1 Bali: Religion, History, Social Structure

Of the more than 17,000 islands that comprise the Indonesian nation, Bali differs from its neighbors in two major, interlinked respects: the predominance of Hinduism as the principal religion practiced and the island’s status as a major destination for international tourism. Although Indonesia as a nation is predominantly Muslim (86% at the time of the 2000 census), Bali is predominantly Hindu (88% in 2000), according to the 2013 CIA World Factbook. Bali is the only island with a majority Hindu population in Indonesia and indeed one of a few societies outside of the South Asian subcontinent that is primarily Hindu. The islanders’ status as a
religious minority within their broader geographical context has also set them apart culturally
from their neighbors, fostering a unique set of religious-cultural practices that are central not
only to Balinese daily life but also the island’s attractiveness as a tourist destination, especially
through the elaborate spectacles of religiously derived music, dance, and dramatic traditions.

Forms of Hinduism first came to be practiced in Indonesia as early as the first century CE,
resulting in the series of Hindu kingdoms that rose and fell across Java, Bali’s larger island
neighbor to the West, from the 4th through 15th centuries. The last of these kingdoms, the
Majapahit, collapsed at the end of the 15th century as Muslim invaders fractured the already
weak empire, sending large numbers of Majapahit artisans, priests, courtiers, and performers, as
well as the royal family, to Bali in the east. Establishing themselves among the animist
indigenous Balinese, the Majapahit quickly spread their culture throughout the island, fusing it
with local religious traditions to form what is today Balinese Hinduism (*Agama Hindu Bali*, or
*Agama Tirta*).

Even before the 15th century, Bali was already an intercultural crossroads. Evidence of
Balinese trade with the Chinese is found as early as the 7th century CE, possibly already
influencing subsequent Balinese performing arts through the barong (Barski, Beaucourt, and
Carpenter 2007). By the 8th century CE, indigenous practices had blended with bronze-casting
technology from Northern Vietnam. Hinduism and Buddhism made an appearance by the 8th
century CE, and by the 12th century CE, there are already records of intermarriages and cultural
exchange between Bali and Java and between Bali and China. However, the establishment of the
neo-Majapahit court at Gelgel (now in Klungkung province) in the 15th century established a
new island-wide, distinctly Balinese, Hindu culture.

Visits to the island by the Portuguese and the Dutch starting in the late 16th century
coincided with the splintering of the kingdom of Gelgel into nine separate kingdoms in the mid-
17th century, each of which competed with each other militarily but also through cultural
production and performance (Hobart, Ramseyer, and Leeman 1996). The resulting regional
division created political, economic, and cultural rivalries that continue to this day; island-wide
musical competition teams are divided according to current *kabupaten* (administrative district)
borders which are similar to the borders of the old kingdoms.

While Dutch colonial influence was felt in Bali beginning by the 16th century, it was only
at the end of the 19th century that substantive portions of the island came under Dutch control. In
1908, the last of the Balinese kingdoms—Klungkung—fell to the Dutch. The completion of this conquest was bloody. Members of the Balinese courts at Bandung (1906) and Klungkung (1908), faced with insurmountable odds against defeating the oncoming Dutch forces, had performed mass ritual suicides (puputan) in front of the oncoming Dutch troops. Facing international criticism for these final moves to secure the island—at Klungkung alone, the royal family and approximately two hundred followers were slaughtered as they faced down the Dutch army—the Dutch enacted a European-style system of government on Bali that also sought to preserve Balinese traditional life. With a commonly held notion among the Dutch that Balinese culture was simply the preserved remnants of the Majaphit imperial culture, Bali was made into a “living museum,” a tourist attraction (Vickers 1989, Yamashita 2003).

Bali briefly fell to Imperial Japan during World War II. Soon after, the first movements for national independence began across the islands that would become Indonesia, and after another three years under Dutch rule (from 1946-1949), Bali became a part of the Republic of Indonesia in 1949. The early years of independence were rife with struggles to maintain traditional Hindu identities under the reign of Sukarno, the half-Balinese first president of Indonesia. During the Liberal Democracy era of the island (1950-1957), six distinct presidential cabinets rose and fell, the longest lasting of which remained in power for only two years. Following rebellions in 1957, Sukarno declared martial law, which lasted until his establishment of a new form of government—Guided Democracy (Demokrasi Terpimpin) in the spring of 1957. In the belief that Indonesia with its diffuse and ethnically diverse population was unsuited to a Western-style democracy, the Guided Democracy system instead was in part modeled from traditional village government principles blended with Chinese-style communism. The plan for government that followed was meant to blend nationalism, religion, and communism (nasionalisme, agama, komunisme; together, “Nas-A-Kom”), thus pacifying the three most powerful factions in the country: the Indonesian army, Islamic groups, and the nation’s multiple distinct communist parties (Robinson 1998).

Although the Guided Democracy system was meant to consolidate power and end the constant stream of uprisings and rebellions by different ethnic groups across the provinces, it had the opposite effect. Fearful of a corrupt government dominated by Sukarno, Javanese politicians, and members of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party or PKI; one of the largest communist groups in Indonesia), members of various other political and ethnic groups
began to rebel across the islands, most notably in Sulawesi and Sumatra in 1958. Some of these rebellions were aided militarily by the United States in hopes of shifting Indonesia away from communism and alliances with China. The political and economic chaos continued through 1965 with political unrest, extensive inflation, and the rise in dominance of the PKI throughout the nation.

Bali rose to prominence within this new Indonesia, in large part due to Sukarno’s personal ties to the island—one of his four wives was from Bali, and he set up a palace at Tampaksiring, the site of the famous and much-visited Pura Gunung Kawi (Kawi Mountain Temple). During this period, Bali also gained some sense of cultural stability when Hinduism was pronounced as one of Indonesia’s five official religions in 1962. However, the nation’s unrest continued. In the early 1960s, Sukarno’s supporters became divided politically between the PKI and the Indonesian Nationalist Party (Partai Nationalis Indonesia, or PNI). In 1965, in a wave of purges across the nation, PNI supporters in Bali killed approximately 80,000 Balinese suspected of being affiliated with the PKI—approximately 5% of the island’s population.

Following the assumption of the presidency by Suharto in 1966 and the creation of what was termed the New Order (Orde Baru) style of democracy, Bali resumed its simultaneous maintenance of traditional agricultural lifestyles and development of tourism as a source of economic income. Recent years have seen increasing settlement of Bali by outsiders—particularly East Javanese and foreign nationals—and national and international governmental and business concerns are increasingly shaping the employment opportunities for the Balinese, especially in the capital and single true urban area, Denpasar, and tourist-development areas such as Kuta and Ubud.

The island’s eight different kabupaten (regencies) and one kota (city-based special regency, Denpasar), whose boundaries reflect those of the historic Balinese kingdoms, maintain some distinct differences in terms of dialect, dress, food, and genre and style of the local performing arts, even though postcolonial systems of government and education in particular have given a more uniform cultural context to the island as a whole. The different regencies also contain their own local tourism and cultural boards that work to preserve each district’s distinct heritage and traditions.
The core of Balinese society still rotates around the rhythms of traditional life. A large proportion of Balinese families are farmers, cultivating vegetables and starchy foods including rice—the staple starch of the Balinese diet and an important component of religious offerings—as well as raising chickens and pigs. Even for Balinese working away from home in larger towns, family and religious social life still revolves around the ancestral village, where a complex constellation of social groupings—including by gender, age, marital status, inherited family caste, and place within desa adat (ritual devotional grouping) and banjar (neighborhood association)\(^6\)—dictate each individual’s role in collectively taking care of the many different tasks required for important temple ceremonies and village-wide social and ritual events (Eiseman 1990). Although Bali has become more Indonesianized through nationwide systems of government, education, and employment, traditional Hindu ritual life is still an integral part of the Balinese culture, permeating nearly every facet of life on the island: from the individual, daily giving of offerings to life-cycle events celebrated by the whole family, to village-wide social structure to island-wide celebrations scheduled in accordance with the lunar Balinese calendar (Pollman 1990, Eiseman 1990).

\(^6\) The banjar functions as a subdivision of the village. Each banjar has its own local governance and organizations that serve both ritual purposes and serve as social and financial support for the members of the banjar. They may also sponsor teams for sporting events (fishing competitions, kite-flying competitions, etc.)
Tourism in particular and a more international focus in general, however, have vastly changed some parts of the island, bringing foreign consumer products and cultural influences into the homes of the less-rural Balinese. By the beginning of the 21st century, up to 80% of Bali’s economy depended on tourism, although for many, agricultural practices still supplement tourism-based income (Baker 2003). With the rise of tourism, systematic changes to traditional methods of rice farming, and the rise among Balinese youth of an internationally oriented consumer culture, Bali in the 21st century faces an increasingly challenging balancing act between maintaining traditional values and cultures and continuing to be a renowned destination for Indonesian nationals and foreigners alike. The performing arts are an important site for these continued cultural negotiations.

1.2.2 Contextualizing Music within Balinese Society

It had been a frustrating day. Only an hour before my 9 am kendang lesson, my young teacher in Denpasar, Kadek, had called me to cancel. He was very sorry, but he had forgotten that he was supposed to play at a temple ceremony out in Tabanan that day; they had called to remind him and had given him a meeting time that was earlier than he expected, and he was one of the two lead drummers in the gamelan. Still half-asleep despite having taken an increasingly frigid “hot shower” at the rumah kos (boarding house), I let his apology in Indonesian, slightly slowed for my benefit, wash over my brain. “Ok,” I replied, “Tidak apa-apa” (it’s no problem). Confirming that we would be on again for tomorrow, I hung up. More time to practice before my dance lesson later in the afternoon. But, when I got to the dance lesson, it too was cut short; village social obligations took precedence. I stayed a short while to watch the musical gathering in Kesiman, my dance teacher’s village, but I was tired from even an hour of dancing in the hot, humid Denpasar winter (August) and from waking up early for the lesson that hadn’t happened. Soon the press of the crowd was too much. Mounting the motorbike and skirting the neighborhood beleganjur group as it marched through the tiny lanes, I headed home.

Later that night, in a craving for something to eat other than the usual Balinese or homemade fare, I headed out on the bike again to Sanur, a touristy beach town that abutted my upper middle-class Denpasar neighborhood, Renon. It was sushi night, a treat that I had not had since leaving the States some months before. Pulling onto Jalan Danau Tamblingan was shocking; I generally tried to avoid marked tourist territories. Suddenly, expensive international boutiques replaced the cheap tee-shirt shops of my neighborhood. Restaurants had neon signs
instead of ones on printed vinyl, wooden chairs instead of plastic stools. There were people with pale skin and large bellies wearing too little clothing. I balked, second-guessing my choice, but entered the sushi restaurant anyway. I was soon rewarded, not only with raw fish but with music—a gamelan group was practicing, presumably in the temple just a little down the street. Though I had been craving a culinary break, I smiled at being able to hear the group practice (it was clearly a practice, not a performance). As they switched from piece to piece, I played the game of trying to name each one after only a few notes—and often succeeded; they were playing standard, modern dance repertoire. Maybe it was a tourist group on its night off? Even outside of traditional cultural contexts, I could not escape the gamelan. It was a good thought.

Culturally, the performing arts play a large and visible role within modern Balinese Hindu society. It is not uncommon to walk down the streets of any Balinese village at night—or even a tourist area such as Sanur, not particularly known for its local or tourist-oriented performance groups—and hear the gamelan practicing in the distance. Or to be stopped while driving to another part of the island as a cremation procession, complete with gamelan beleganjur, accompanies an impossibly tall cremation tower that is being rotated at the crossroads to prevent the demons from snatching the soul of the body within. Or to walk into a warung, a small street-side restaurant, and see the TV turned to the video feed of a dance-drama recently performed at the Bali Arts Festival. The pervasive cultural context for Balinese gamelan is one of the most attractive reasons for foreigners to come study Balinese gamelan in Bali; there are any number of immersion experiences that are possible.

And students of gamelan have many different repertoires to choose from. There are many types of gamelan in Bali; up to forty different kinds are played today. Gamelans can range in size from two members to well over fifty. They can be constructed of bamboo, iron, bronze or wood. Although most gamelans feature some types of keyed instruments struck with mallets, they can also contain gongs, small gong-chimes, cymbals, bamboo flutes, bowed two-string rebab, and drums—or not. There are old styles of gamelan that are barely played anymore and new popular styles. There are styles used almost solely for religious functions, and genres that emerged in other contexts for other purposes. The gamelans are all tuned differently as well—both in terms of types of scale (five-note slendro or seven-note pelog) and numbers of scale tones used in one octave of each instrument and in that each ensemble is tuned slightly differently from others of
its type. Based on the differences in materials of construction, instrumentation, and musical style and function of different gamelans, the word “gamelan” itself can best be thought of as referring to any one of these ensembles as a whole or to connote its collective members (Bakan 2012: 88).

There are other musical influences within Bali—Western bubblegum pop music and Indonesian punk and metal seem to be popular, particularly in the more urban areas and among the younger Balinese. However, the traditional Balinese performing arts—dance, wayang, and gamelan—still dominate the Balinese soundscapes, in large part to their affiliation with the still vastly influential religious practices of the Balinese. Muslim Indonesians practice mudik: once a year, everyone goes home to their family houses in the villages to celebrate the end of the Ramadan holiday. Balinese Hindus make a similar type of journey to their home village multiple times a year for family and village-wide religious events. Such events are considered to be incomplete without gamelan and dance, which serve both as offerings to the gods and as human entertainment. More specialized genres—full dance-dramas and wayang kulit (shadow puppetry)—are also preferred to be present at these types of events, but are more contingent upon village resources.

There are a number of different types of ensemble groups that play gamelans, but at a most basic level, the majority of gamelan groups in Bali today are either affiliated with a banjar or a sanggar. While the banjar-based groups by default draw primarily from musicians within the banjar, sanggars too usually incorporate primarily local members. Both may play for temple ceremonies or other social events, but sanggars may also have other, more specialized aims, such as preserving certain types of repertoire, performing for tourists, or teaching foreigners.

The first gamelans likely came to exist in Bali in the 9th century, but most of the different types of gamelans present today on the island are derived from those brought over from Java during the Majapahit era and developed for different purposes in Bali (Dibia and Ballinger 2004: 22). The ancient (tua) gamelans, such as the iron-keyed gamelan selonding, are primarily associated with religious ritual. The middle-period (madya) gamelan such as gamelan semar pegulingan and gamelan pelegongan were associated with royal entertainments in the Balinese kingdoms from the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries, but also have been used in religious contexts. One of the consequences of the completion of the Dutch colonization of Bali and the dissolution of the courts at the beginning of the twentieth century was the destruction of many of the older gamelans. While many of the tua- and madya-era gamelans have nearly disappeared,
some—like the marching gamelan angklung and gamelan beleganjur, originally used for cremation ceremonies—not only continue in those functions but have also been repurposed (Bakan 1998a, Ornstein 2010) and remain popular today. This social restructuring also led to the development of modern gamelan ensembles and playing styles—namely the flashy, virtuosic gamelan gong kebyar, created mostly to play new repertoire but widely used in temple ceremonies. More recently the gamelan semaradana was developed to accommodate playing both pelog-scale and slendro-scale pieces on the same set of instruments. The popularity of different genres of gamelan has ebbed and flowed over the course of the last century as movements by different performing groups towards innovation and performance have intersected with popular demands, bolstered by cultural influences from the outside world.

The distinctiveness of Balinese culture and its performing arts in comparison with other concurrent performing arts practices, even those in Java, have led writers historically to describe Bali as being cut off from the influences of the outside world. American composer Colin McPhee was one of the first people to document Balinese music during his stay on the island in the 1920s and 1930s. At the beginning of his work *Music in Bali* (1966), he notes that since the fall of the Majapahit Empire, Bali “has since remained in cultural isolation” (McPhee 1966:4), as he puts it, “immune” to religious conversion—and also, implicitly, cultural conversion. Earlier Dutch colonial administrators went further, claiming the Balinese as a living cultural remnant of the Javanese Hindu kingdoms (Hobart, Ramseyer, and Leeman 1996). The trope of isolationism—Bali, “the last paradise”—was one most entirely perpetrated by tourist publications and popular writings at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the midst of the multitudinous purple prose about Bali at the early mid-century, one passage in the book *Dance and Drama in Bali* by Beryl DeZoete and Walter Spies (1939) draws attention to itself for avoiding this cultural isolationist trope:

Bali is neither a last nor a lost paradise, but the home of a peculiarly gifted people of mixed race, endowed with a great sense of humour and a great sense of style, where their own traditions are concerned; and with a suppleness of mind which enabled them to take what they want of the alien civilizations which have been reaching them for centuries and to leave the rest (DeZoete and Spies 1939: 2).

This pragmatic interpretation of Bali is soon lost; in the next paragraph, Spies writes that “the core of Bali remains inviolate. Village custom…lies entirely beyond the reach of foreign
influence…” (DeZoete and Spies 1939: 3). The external recognition of Bali’s cultural flexibility and its close ties to the “desa, kala, patra” idea would have to wait until the next century.

Modern musical writings about Bali (discussed in section 1.4, “Theoretical Approaches and Review of Literature”) cannot help but acknowledge some outside influences upon the island’s cultural makeup and performing arts traditions. Most recently, a large body of research on tourism in Bali (discussed in the next section and further below) has illuminated how Balinese policy towards tourism has influenced the makeup of the performing arts. However, in many other contexts, while a foreign-Bali connection is briefly traced, it is swiftly forgotten or countermanded, like in the Spies article. The following section introduces some points for consideration in conceptualizing Balinese culture in dialogue with specifically American influences.

1.2.3 Balinese Culture, North America, and the Ethnomusicologists

Ethnomusicologist Mantle Hood wrote in his seminal work *The Ethnomusicologist* (1971):

The attitudes of different societies and of different groups within a society toward the arts vary widely…For the sake of comparative illustration, we might look briefly at two contrasting examples with the assumption that the attitudes of all other societies fall somewhere between these two extremes: the United States and the island of Bali…Viewed as a total society, the United States regards the arts as nonessential, low on its scale of values. The hero of the day is in orbit in outer space or tunneling into the bowels of the earth or exploring the ocean floor. The poet, the painter, the musician, the dancer, the writer, the actor manage a tolerable acceptance as nonessential members of an affluent society…The island of Bali, to the best of my knowledge, has more artists per capita than any other society. Here, where religion pervades every aspect of living, the creation and performance of music, dance, various forms of theater, sculpture, painting, and decoration are such an indispensable part of religious devotion that the arts, too, have become a way of life…There is no word in the Balinese language for “art”; the arts are such an organic part of living that there appears to be no need for such an abstraction. (Hood 1971: 13-15)

Hood’s viewpoint of American and Balinese musical societies as polar opposites is not likely to be one supported by many scholars and musicians today. For one, the idea of construing any two musical societies as such seems anathema to trends taken by ethnomusicologists in recent years. Additionally, the attitudinal dichotomy he establishes suggests that this polarity
might make American and Balinese musical and societal structures inherently incompatible. Yet, today there are almost two hundred gamelan groups, Balinese and otherwise, within the United States. Of these, there are at least seventy active Balinese gamelan groups, over half of which are located at educational institutions (mostly colleges and universities) and are mostly played by students. This is a relatively small number of ensembles compared to the number of institutions of higher education that contain, for example, Western-style orchestral ensembles; however, the current gamelan presence is quite large indeed, considering that immigrants from Indonesia as a whole comprise only about 0.03% of the population of the United States, according to the 2010 census (“The Asian Population: 2010” 2012). The numbers of Balinese Americans are much smaller; of the few extant publications about modern Indonesian-American communities, Balinese individuals rarely merit a mention (Ling 2008). Additionally, while gamelan music has not broken into mainstream popularity in North America, the ensembles are well-known and well-loved by niche groups of enthusiasts and have become disproportionately popular in both community and academic music-making settings since the mid-twentieth century. As Bruno Nettl notes in *Heartland Excursions: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music*,

> One may question the exotic character of gamelans in the context of American institutions. According to an official of the Indonesian embassy charged with keeping such records, in 1992 there were more than two hundred gamelans extant and active in the United States. Rivaling in number the so-called Collegia Musica [early music groups], gamelans may well be regarded as belonging to and having a standard function in American culture (Nettl 1995: 187).

While Nettl’s statement can be read as hyperbolic, it is also indicative of the widespread presence of gamelans throughout the country; gamelan has become part of the “world music canon” in the United States.

The dispersion of hundreds of gamelans of different types across the world is a result of a complex set of processes related to the history of immigration, international trade, and local and transnational ideals of music education. The arrival, maintenance, and lived realities of gamelan ensembles in other areas of the world, such as the United Kingdom (Mendonça 2002) and Japan (Steele 2013), are all predicated upon the countries’ institutional situations and the choices of individuals who built and shaped those institutions. The lived existence of Javanese gamelans within the United States, though in large part sharing historical roots with the beginnings of

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7 There are about another ten gamelans, five of which are Balinese, in Canada. I exclude them from these numbers to keep the statistics consistent.
Balinese gamelans, has different nuances based both on Javanese culture and its more longstanding reception abroad (Sumarsam 2013). Additionally, a considerable amount of pan-gamelan interest (the involvement of individuals in playing more than one type of gamelan) occurs throughout the world; this pan-gamelan culture is fostered at many levels, including the teaching of Javanese gamelan at Balinese institutions of higher education and vice versa; the existence of pan-gamelan festivals in the United Kingdom and elsewhere (Mendonça 2002: 17-22); and the maintenance of an open gamelan listserv, created in 1994 by Jody Diamond and Ken Worthy and hosted by Dartmouth College. This listserv contains posts primarily in English written by posters in the United States and the United Kingdom. Its contents include concert announcements, technical questions relating to theoretical aspects of different gamelan music and the maintenance of gamelans, and death notices for Indonesian musicians, among others.

The analyses of gamelan culture outside of the America-Bali network or the pan-gamelan phenomenon, though pertinent to fully conceptualizing the spread and influence of gamelan culture around the world and as it continues to live in Indonesia, are largely outside the purview of this dissertation. While the U.S.-Bali connection is clearly not a bounded system, I in large part treat it as such, with discussion of other geographical points as they enter the main area of my discussion. The question of “why Balinese gamelan in the United States?” is sufficiently complex, yet sufficiently representative of other transnational gamelan cultures, to provide a case study within broader gamelan culture.

The first answer historically to “how and why Balinese gamelan in the United States?” concerns the “romance of Bali.” After the embarrassing puputans of the 1900s, Dutch colonists worked to maintain Balinese culture, in large part creating a paradise (Vickers 1989) for the consumption of the foreign visitor. By the 1930s, the island had seen a boom in tourism (Picard 1996), with thousands of mostly-European visitors flocking to the island yearly. Among the foreign visitors were a number of mostly-European artists, musicians, and scholars, including Jane Belo, Walter Spies, Margaret Mead, and Colin McPhee. In addition to the tourist advertisements, these artists brought back with them gamelan recordings by Odeon and Beka, which were spread throughout artist-composer circles in the New York City area (mainly by McPhee). With Bali already in the popular eye through tourist advertisements, gamelan music had now spread to intellectual circles.
Bali was one of many “island paradise” locations that became popular for Western tourists at the beginning of the twentieth century; however, its musical legacy within the United States differed from other island paradise areas precisely because knowledge of the music was spread through the direct use of recordings, and mostly through scholarly or artistic circles. This is in direct contrast to the contemporaneous spread of other such island musical cultures, such as that of Hawaii. For Americans in particular, Hawaii served a similar role as an idealized travel destination; although its location was geographically distant enough and its culture sufficiently foreign to the American mainstream to seem exotic, the island was made more approachable by being a territory of the United States. Additionally, as Charles Hiroshi Garrett describes in “Sounds of Paradise: Hawaii and the American Musical Imagination” (Garrett 2008), the music and culture of Hawaii became an exoticized staple of Tin Pan Alley composers, who incorporated lyrics about beautiful Hawai`ian women and imitations of the sounds of popular Hawaiian musical instruments, such as the ukulele. The sounds and images of Hawaii, however distorted through the lyrics and musical language of Tin Pan Alley, became known throughout the United States through these popular songs. However, the “Hawaii craze” waxed and waned with little orderly impetus towards perpetuating the study of original Hawaiian musical genres.

This was in direct contrast to the spread of gamelan. While it did not achieve overwhelming popularity in popular music circles, gamelan music was an early adoption into systematic pedagogical study of “world musics.” Correspondingly, the second answer to the question “why Balinese gamelan?” concerns the birth of the field of ethnomusicology. The origin of the word itself came from the title of a book by the Dutch musicologist Jaap Kunst: *Musicologica: A Study of the Nature of Ethno-musicology, Its Problems, Methods, and Representative Personalities* (Kunst 1950). The word was adopted by a new group of mostly American scholars who formed a new Society for Ethnomusicology in 1955, in part to differentiate their parameters of scholarly inquiry from those of the American Anthropological Association (founded in 1902) and the American Musicological Society (founded in 1934).

In addition to his ideas about ethnomusicology and world music study in general, Kunst also left a legacy in the study of Indonesian gamelan music. He became interested in gamelan while touring with a string quartet through Java and Bali. Although he was in Bali for a very short period of time, Kunst wrote the first book about Balinese music (Kunst et. al. 1925) and an even more substantial volume about Javanese music in 1934, which was later translated into
English (Kunst 1949). The first non-Indonesian Balinese gamelan was founded in the Netherlands in 1941 by one of Kunst’s students (Mendonça 2002); others followed around the world. Most notable for the progression of world music studies in America was the work of Mantle Hood, one of Kunst's dissertation advisees at the University of Amsterdam. Under Kunst's tutelage, Hood too became fascinated with gamelan and later established the first gamelans, both Javanese and Balinese, at the University of California-Los Angeles in 1958 and 1959. Other institutions followed suit, with Wesleyan University being the next to obtain a gamelan in the late 1960s and a former Wesleyan professor, the late Robert Brown, becoming the first to establish substantive student study-abroad programs to Bali. Since then, gamelans have popped up across the United States at an increasing pace, resulting in the large number that are active today.

A third component that contributes to the popularity of gamelans in the West in particular is the sheer, impressive complexity of the ensembles. The instruments themselves—constructed from elaborately carved wood with metal components requiring advanced metallurgy—require highly skilled artisans to construct them. The ensemble itself is one of the few large-scale polyphonic orchestral traditions worldwide, its multitude of distinct instruments and instrumental roles making it very easy to liken to a Western orchestra. That the gamelans’ history is several centuries old and directly tied to classical forms also contributed to this appeal. In sum, at the beginning of the study of world music, because gamelan music had these similarities to Western classical music, it could be easily described as “advanced” music as opposed to the “primitive” art forms of other cultures (Nettl 1995; Sumarsam 2004: 69-74) and thus worthy of study.

These three factors—exoticism, long-held ties to the field of ethnomusicology, and impressiveness to specifically Western sensibilities—are still crucial to gamelan’s relative success and attractiveness, especially within the academic world. However, there are additional reasons one could posit for why non-Indonesians keep playing gamelan as well—for example, “affinity,” a feeling of belonging in the type of social and musical setting that is often created within gamelan groups outside of Indonesia (Mendonça 2002, Lueck 2012). Although this particular issue is not the central focus of this dissertation, it will addressed in the context of cohesion between American students and their Balinese teachers.

Since the mid-twentieth century, musicians from other nations including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand have been active in
studying, performing, and contributing to the world of Balinese gamelan. Opportunities to teach and perform abroad have also caused Balinese artists to pursue residencies in America, Europe, and Japan, either at universities or with locally based gamelan groups (Diamond and Benary 2001: 1013). This context outside of Bali and Indonesia provides different artistic challenges and opportunities for both expatriate Balinese and local members. A number of Balinese gamelan groups throughout the United States continue to host and work with Balinese artists; such international connections bring opportunities for an interchange of both musical and scholarly ideas, with Balinese musicians pursuing formal education in America as well as Americans studying in Bali, leading to a constant musical and scholarly exchange.

In large part, this cultural exchange centers on learning and playing music. In addition to concerts, Balinese music enthusiasts may now take music or dance lessons, offered for free or a variety of prices. In North America such classes are available through university and embassy groups as well as through community organizations such as Gamelan Sekar Jaya and the Balinese gamelan group at the Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix, Arizona. In Bali, classes are available through single practitioners, packaged tours, or through groups such as Gamelan Mekar Bhuana and Gamelan Çudamani. Additionally, recorded Balinese gamelan music began to be released overseas starting in the late 1920s, and despite a hiatus in newly-released recordings through the midcentury, Balinese gamelan music has since gained a small but firm niche in the world music market. Finally, as a result of the increasing influence of the internet as a marketing tool for gamelan groups in cities and towns throughout the world, the availability of knowledge about these products and experiences has expanded to include many sites outside of Bali itself and to foster a community of gamelan enthusiasts in select areas throughout the world. Through the exchange of monetary and intellectual capital, it seems that fully understanding the Balinese musical arts requires studying the continued musical and intellectual interactions of

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8 One could point to I Nyoman Wenten, I Madé Lasmawan, I Ketut Gedé Asnawa, I Nyoman Saptanyana, I Madé Bandem, I Nyoman Windha, I Wayan Dibia, and many other artists who have spent extensive time performing and teaching in the United States.
9 Community-based groups such as Gamelan Dharma Swara in New York City, Gamelan Tunas Mekar in Boulder, Colorado, groups at the consulates in both Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles, and a number of university-based groups, such as at Florida State University, Bowling Green State University, and California Institute of the Arts, among others.
10 For example, noted dancer I Wayan Dibia, who received a master’s degree from California Institute of the Arts and a PhD from the University of California-Los Angeles.
11 These early recordings have since recently been re-released in the recording series Bali 1928.
performers, composers, and producers of Balinese music and related arts of different backgrounds across the world.

1.2.4 Envisioning a Transnational Gamelan Community

Having briefly established a context for gamelans in America and their connections to Bali, the question emerges: who, then, constitutes the transnational Balinese-American gamelan community? While the most obvious answer might be “all of the gamelan musicians in Bali and America,” the answer is not quite so simple. One might argue that a Balinese village musician who does not travel abroad, does not perform for tourists, and does not teach foreigners, would not “count.” Yet, if that individual had studied at the arts conservatories in Denpasar, his education would be in part influenced by international pedagogical ideas. On the other hand, any American who plays in a gamelan might be counted by default; that individual’s musical training is the result of transnational pedagogical interactions.

In this dissertation, I generally consider the following to be distinct classes of individuals to be significantly involved in this transnational scene:

- Balinese musicians in Bali, especially Balinese pedagogues and performers who work in international contexts
- American Balinese-focused ethnomusicologists and other long-term gamelan enthusiasts
- American students of Balinese gamelan
- The audiences, both Balinese and American, that attend concerts of gamelans shaped by transnational contexts

These individuals can also cross over between categories, as audience members become students, students become teachers, etc. The contexts of performance within the transnational Balinese gamelan community also vary wildly; temples in Bali and American university concert halls provide very different socio-cultural and musical contexts. These sites and contexts present a stage, both literal and figurative, in which the transnational musical communities are constituted and the real blend of cultures occurs. The classifications of individuals and venues, presented here for the sake of clarity in conceptualizing the study as a whole, are explored in ethnographic detail throughout this work.
1.3 Methods: Constructing a Transnational Study

The painting style of Batuan—a Balinese village situated about six miles south of Ubud—is one of the most distinctive artistic techniques on the island. These paintings exemplify the artistic principle of *horror vacui*: every inch of the canvas is filled with distinct tiny figures and scenes from daily life in Bali. Yet, instead of the negative connotation of the Latin term, which means “a fear of empty space,” the Balinese paintings are more a celebration of the complexity, simultaneity, and inter-relatedness of activity on the island. Women do wash clothes in the river downstream from the village where the beleganjur musicians are guiding a cremation ceremonial procession. The paintings mix scenes of sacred and secular, everyday and magical, traditional and modern; it is not uncommon to see depictions of Balinese villagers who are watching foreigners who are taking pictures of a barong dance at which a real spirit is represented as being present at the scene. The reality that the painting depicts is encoded in each individual scene, the scenes as they relate to each other, and the overall painting as a whole—painters of larger, more sophisticated works often arrange all of the smaller scenes according to a *mandala*, a sacred map reflecting the directional hierarchy and balance of the Balinese Hindu universe.

My process of research and this dissertation as a whole reflect the telescoping values and organization of a Batuan-style painting. Faced with literally a whole world of Balinese gamelans whose histories, cultures, individual members, and artistic impacts are dependent upon each other and constitute a picture so complex that it is difficult to tell where one temporal-spatial event ends and another begins, I approached my research as an exploration of these scenes, each leading logically to another but none constituting a direct path or implying a comprehensive representation of each place or event as a whole.

To document Balinese gamelan pedagogy as transnational phenomenon, by necessity I had to make my scope multinational in focus, featuring visits to different sites across the United States and in Bali. The stories that I tell took place in cities and villages, in the United States and in Bali, and in the liminal communicative space of the internet. Given the limited scale of a dissertation as a writing form, my research and writing cannot hope to document all of the locations and communities central to the international Balinese gamelan scene nor tell all of their stories. In this context, I can only hope that my work allows other scholars of Balinese music and
culture to see their own world differently and to tell the stories of other gamelans and musicians who have contributed so much to this transnational scene.

My dissertation research and perspectives are rooted first and foremost in my participation and growth as a musician and dancer of Balinese traditional performing arts styles, particularly traditions associated with gamelan gong kebyar repertoire. Although I had played with the Florida State University Balinese gamelan, Sekaa Gong Hanuman Agung, as a master’s student, my participation in the ensemble starting at the beginning of my doctoral study in 2009 was what prompted my interest in Balinese gamelan, how it was taught both in Bali and abroad, and how the “culture-bearers”—Balinese teachers who taught both in North America and in Bali—bridged the gap between the two locales, creating gamelan culture in America, influencing gamelan culture in Bali, and shaping their own lives in the process.

I began my preliminary research with my first trip to Bali in the summer of 2010 to study gamelan music and dance at the Gamelan Çudamani 2010 Summer Institute, a program for foreign musicians and dancers to study the traditional Balinese arts. During this first stay in Bali, my primary objectives were to obtain a general understanding of Balinese culture and improve my own gamelan performance skills. The events of this summer, though formally cleared through the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, are discussed here only to contextualize the more central narrative.

The beginning of my focus on I Madé Lasmawan and his world as the center of my study began in the summer of 2011. During that summer, I studied Indonesian language in Indonesia with funding from the U.S. Department of State’s Critical Language Scholarship. The language institute was located at Universitas Negeri Malang in Malang, Java; however, during the one term holiday, I traveled to Bali as described in the prologue and determined that Lasmawan’s life, family, and history would make an ideal grounding, central example for the dissertation. The surrounding time that I spent traveling in Java both that summer and in the summer of 2012 additionally provided me with cultural context into the broader Indonesian arts situation.

In the summer of 2012, I conducted my primary research in Bali for approximately four months with the support of a Florida State University International Dissertation Semester Research Grant. The first six weeks of this time were primarily spent in residence with Lasmawan’s family in the village of Bangah, near Baturiti in the Tabanan region of Bali, Indonesia. During this period I lived with Lasmawan’s immediate family and his international
students and guests in their second family house-cum-performance space on the outskirts of the village. Within this context, I participated in the daily life of the family and the organized groups of foreign students as they worked, rehearsed, and participated in village life, including performing for several local temple ceremonies. I additionally ventured into the village on my own to talk with the local people and get a sense of Lasmawan’s cultural context.

Following a week of recuperation and visits to other contacts in the Ubud area of the Gianyar region, I took up residence in Denpasar, Bali. Although each region of Bali has its own musical traditions, playing styles, and histories, Denpasar is home to many official Balinese musical institutions, including its high school and college-level arts conservatories and the annual Bali Arts Festival, an event showcasing different performing arts groups from around Bali. My intent in working in this area was to compare the lifestyles in areas with which I was already somewhat familiar—village and tourist-centric areas of Tabanan and Gianyar—with the more institutional culture of Denpasar. Organizing five weeks of private dance and kendang study, I was able to meet a number of teachers and students affiliated in one way or the other with the conservatory. Through speaking with them and accompanying them to events in Denpasar, Kuta, Singapadu, and other areas in Gianyar, I was able to gain broader perspective on how the official arts apparatus functions within Bali.

Returning to the United States, I undertook several research trips to gain a clearer contextual sense of gamelans in America as a whole. In October 2012, I spent eight days in the urban Northeast, observing rehearsals and meeting with the members of gamelans in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York, culminating in a dance performance at Yale University. A visit to Colorado in May 2013 (funded by the Florida State University Dissertation Research Grant) provided the culmination of my dissertation research, as I performed in an event honoring Lasmawan’s founding of the Balinese gamelan at Colorado College twenty years prior. During this trip, I also met with original members of several of Lasmawan’s Colorado-based groups and was able to situate in place the stories that he and others had told me about this facet of his performance and teaching.

During the intervening period between intensive research trips, I gained further information on my topic through web-based research and online and phone-based discussions with members of the international Balinese gamelan community. Additionally, I gained an
inestimable amount of knowledge about ensemble teaching in conversation with my teachers about my own experience as the director of Sekaa Gong Hanuman Agung in Spring 2013.

Continuing the analogy to Batuan-style painting, this research, then, represents a single large community that has been filtered through the lived experience of a single “artist;” the dissertation itself, a collection of stories woven together through recurring characters, places, musical repertoire, and theoretical observations. Through this juxtaposition and interpretation of these stories, I hope to suggest a new way of conceiving of Balinese gamelan, its performance, its pedagogy, and its culture: not only as individual “scenes” within a primarily Balinese context with all non-Balinese positioned as outsiders looking in, but rather as one large, interconnected system in which the characters, places, and musical repertoire serve as nodes or nexuses through which cultural meaning can be understood.

1.4 Theoretical Approach and Literature Review

In this dissertation, I conceive of individual performing artists, musical groups, and institutions that practice and promote the Balinese traditional performing arts as interrelated parts of a transnational Balinese gamelan ecosystem. The definition of the word *ecosystem* in the Merriam Webster Dictionary—“the complex of a community of organisms and its environment functioning as an ecological unit”—describes the lives and interrelationships of biological organisms; I instead focus on gamelan groups as cultural organisms. By viewing “organisms” to mean individual gamelan groups and their constituent musicians, “environment” to indicate the institutional frameworks and networks within which these groups function, and “ecological unit” to imply a substantive, existentially necessary link between the functions of gamelans in America and Bali (academic-local, academic-foreign, tourist, village-centric, etc.), I implicate American musicians in shaping gamelan as a transnational phenomenon just as much as their Balinese teachers.

Focusing on the relationship between Bali and the United States and centering on pedagogy rather than performance, composition, or tourism as a primary vantage point, I illuminate the networks created and maintained by individuals that transcend the locational nodes of Balinese gamelan as an extended community. Viewing Balinese gamelan as having cultural and pedagogical properties that are distinctive from both other types of gamelan and world music ensembles as a whole, I follow the interplay of
specifically Balinese cultural and musical ideals, examining how interrelated systems of Balinese gamelan education have influenced and counter-influenced each other pedagogically, socially, and economically. From that point, I extrapolate how similar principles might apply within other transnational musical-pedagogical contexts. Finally, in examining this transnational ecosystem in terms of geographic and kinship-based relationships, I demonstrate how cultural paradigms important to traditional Balinese Hindu philosophy and social life have been shaped by Balinese gamelan education in the United States, and how these non-Balinese relationships have correspondingly altered systems of education within Bali.

Below, I situate these theoretical positions within the literature on Bali, world music pedagogy, and cultural geography. Given that these three topics contain a vast number of publications on their respective subjects, what follows is a focused review of works on the Balinese performing arts and theoretical perspectives that are most pertinent to this dissertation.

1.4.1 Gamelan in Bali: Tradition and Change

Although accounts of Balinese society and culture date back several hundred years, the 1930s witnessed a burst of Western scholarly activity around Bali as expatriate artists and scholars from Europe descended upon the island. Many classic accounts of Balinese musical culture are primarily descriptive, capturing the minute details of the music, dance, staging, and costume for events that were both part of daily Balinese life and staged for observation by visitors to the island (Covarrubias and Luce 1937, De Zoete and Spies 1939, Coast 1953, McPhee 1966). Although not always reflexive in a modern sense, the observations these authors provide are framed within their own range of experience. The majority of the works are written in the ethnographic present, with little emphasis relating to the specific location of events or a sense of their historic differentiation. This descriptive trend that has continued somewhat into the present in works intended as thorough introductory guides to Balinese culture and the arts, although generally framed within a certain time period and locations given as representative areas for types of events and performances (Bandem and DeBoer 1995; Dibia and Ballinger 2004); Eiseman 1990). This emphasis within the literature on description is probably spurred by the widespread non-specialist interest in Bali and the Balinese arts, to which an historic and descriptive style is more appropriate.
Notwithstanding, a number of scholars have documented the prolific artistic creativity of the Balinese within the last century. Central to this creativity was the development of gamelan gong kebyar, a new genre that emerged as a part of a broader modernist movement in the Balinese arts in the 1920s (Tenzer 2000). Gong kebyar is now the most popular gamelan genre in Bali with about 1600 sets present on the island (Tenzer 2011: 155), accommodating both arrangements of traditional pieces originally created for other types of gamelan as well as new compositions. Other musicians working in different genres have focused on reinventing those older genres for newer audiences. One good example is gamelan beleganjur, a genre that is still an essential part of Balinese creation ceremonies, but which throughout the 1980s and 1990s was adapted into a wildly popular contest genre that is still influential throughout the island (Bakan 1999). Even kecak (a vocal gamelan that coalesced into its current form in the 1930s) has been widely adapted for non-touristic purposes in recent years and is now performed in a variety of settings both in Bali and abroad (Dibia 1996, Bakan 2013).

Some of the recent changes in the Balinese “traditional” arts scene have not been to genre or performance infrastructure, but rather to cultural tradition. One notable manifestation of this change is the introduction of women’s gamelan groups (Bakan 1998b, Susilo 2003, Gold 2005, Willner 1992). Although there are isolated accounts of female gamelan musicians in Bali dating back to the mid-20th century, their presence as musicians in performances is relatively rare. Though women’s groups began emerging with formal conservatory-style education in the 1960s (Susilo 2003), their growing numbers throughout the latter half of the twentieth century can be attributed to both internal government cultural policy and motivations (Bakan 1998a: 242-243) and intercultural exchange with Western gamelan groups (Downing 2008). While still primarily divided along gender lines, the continuing development of women’s gamelan groups is one way in which these cross-cultural connections can be exemplified.

Of the scholarly writings on the modern Balinese performing arts that most engage with an international perspective, those by Andrew McGraw (McGraw 2009a, 2009b, 2013) are perhaps the most extensive. Focusing on the Balinese avant-garde and its challenge to Indonesian traditional and arts conservatory cultures, McGraw’s writings frame the lives and ambitions of young Balinese composers and musicians in a context that is strikingly international for literature on Balinese music. In particular, I draw on with McGraw’s discussion of the historical and present official United States patronage of the Indonesian performing arts, especially in terms of
the achievement of higher education by Balinese musicians and the opportunities that has afforded them.

There are several sources that are central to my discussion of how Balinese pedagogical technique differs in practice as directed towards Balinese and American musicians. The studies about gamelan pedagogy for foreigners will be discussed in detail below; here, I detail several works that describe Balinese pedagogy for the Balinese. While many of the modern works mentioned above describe Balinese pedagogy briefly (Gold 2005, McGraw 2013, Tenzer 2000 and 2011), only a few others (Bakan 1994, 1999, Heimarck 2003, Hough 1999) discuss the mechanics specifically. In terms of pedagogy within academic institutions, the theme features prominently in Brita Heimarck’s book *Balinese Discourses on Music and Modernization: Village Voices and Urban Views* (Heimarck 2003), which contrasts village and institutional educational styles within the context of wayang kulit. A more systematic view of the performing arts educational system in Bali is presented in Brett Hough’s *Education for the Performing Arts: Contesting and Mediating Identity in Contemporary Bali* (Hough 1999). These two works have provided reference points from which to contextualize my ethnographic writings about these arts institutions. While the works above mostly refer to the education of the mainstream (male) Balinese musicians, Sonja Downing’s dissertation “Arjuna’s Angels: Girls Learning Gamelan Music in Bali” (Downing 2008) focuses specifically on pedagogical techniques applied to teaching young girls—of relevance to my work in that foreign gamelan musicians with some exception have historically been treated as potentially less-able curiosities as performers, in some ways similar to female Balinese musicians.

Of the Balinese writers on Balinese musical education, I Madé Bandem is perhaps the most prolific. Having led two of Indonesia’s arts conservatories and served on the national board of education, Bandem has played a significant role in the development of formalized higher educational experiences in Bali; his writings (Bandem and DeBoer 1995, Bandem 2011, among others) reflect this longstanding history. Although many Balinese pedagogues publish with some regularity, few explicitly or extensively describe pedagogical technique and tradition in their works. One exception is I Nyoman Sedana, current head of pedalangan at the arts conservatory in Denpasar. Although my dissertation only touches on shadow puppetry, Sedana’s writings about the training of *dalang* (puppet masters) informs my general descriptions of Balinese teaching technique.
Finally, in that my dissertation focuses somewhat crucially on I Madé Lasmawan’s life and community as the central portion of my case study, it is important to note other similar works documenting the lives of historically important individuals in the international Balinese arts community. Standalone biographical writings that represent Balinese gamelan developments within the last half of the twentieth century are almost exclusively concerned with American composers who studied and composed in Balinese gamelan idioms, such as biographies and analyses of the works and lives of Colin McPhee (Oja 1990) and Lou Harrison (Miller and Lieberman 2004), who are considered two of the founders of the American gamelan movement. Biographical portraits of influential Balinese composers exist as well (Bakan 1999, Harnish 1997, Tenzer 2000), capturing the lives of such luminaries as I Lotring, I Wayan Berata, I Ketut Sukarata, I Ketut Gede Asnawa, I Madé Lebah, and others. However, these biographical writings are generally fairly short or embedded in much larger works. Given the number of eminent musicians and dancers in the current Balinese gamelan scene, more development should be pursued in this area.

1.4.2 Gamelan Culture in Transnational Contexts

Within scholarly discussions of traditional Indonesian music in the international sphere, more attention has been paid to intercultural relationships between Indonesians and foreigners in Javanese court gamelan traditions than the musical traditions of Bali. For one, collaboration on musical transmission and style is more longstanding. Javanese-American musician, scholar, and ethnomusicologist Sumarsam documents a longstanding tradition of collaboration between Javanese musicians, Westerners, and “Indos” (individuals of both Javanese and Western descent) beginning in the mid-19th century, specifically at the instigation of Western theorists (Sumarsam 1995: 131). As he suggests, the focus on development of notation and theories of *gendhing* (gamelan composition) are in large part due to nationalistic debates over the last century and a half about the place of Javanese *seni tradisi* (traditional court music) and *seni rakyat* (traditional folk music) in constructing a modern Java and a modern Indonesia after the fall of the Javanese courts (Sumarsam 1995: 125-128).

As a scholar, Sumarsam has been well known for his contributions to the music theory of Javanese gamelan traditions. However, Sumarsam’s newest book, *Javanese Gamelan and the West*, elaborates on the historical sections of his theoretical works, providing an extensive and much-needed history and analysis of Javanese gamelan musical teaching and traditions outside
of Java (Sumarsam 2013: 77-114) and tracing musical interactions between the Javanese and Europeans all the way back to English politician and writer Thomas Stanford Raffles (1781-1826), who wrote substantially about 19th century Javanese culture. Turning to the twentieth century, Sumarsam also cites increasing artistic and scholarly cross-education, and the resulting collaboration between Javanese and Western ethnomusicologists, as two of the most important facets of modern gamelan scholarship. From a historiographic perspective, these interactions were crucial to the origin of modern ethnomusicology, as many of its “founding fathers” (including Jaap Kunst and his student Mantle Hood) were intimately involved in musical and theoretical exchanges with Javanese musicians during the course of their lifetimes, with Kunst being among the first to record gamelan music through recordings, notation, and photographs.

The case of Balinese-foreign musical cross-pollinations is quite different from that of Javanese music for several reasons. Unlike in the Javanese courts, there was little recorded musical collaboration between the Balinese and the Dutch in the 19th century since Dutch presence on the island was limited until the early 1900s; as a result, pedagogical norms that became commonplace in Java (such as teaching partly from written notation) did not become as prominent in Balinese musical teaching styles (Sumarsam 1995). In general, Balinese Hindu culture remains more orally-based than that of Central Java. Despite its Hindu origins and stories, Central Javanese court music and dance styles are still tied to religious ceremonies and public entertainments in Muslim Java (Brinner 2008: 4-6); however, not necessarily to the same extent that Balinese gamelan permeates nearly every facet of religious life in Bali. Finally, while Java and Bali are two of the best-known internationally of Indonesia’s approximately 6,000 populated islands, the islands’ renown comes for very different reasons. As the location of the nation’s capital, Java has become a hub for international business. Although there is cultural tourism to Java—particularly to its active volcanoes and monumental Hindu-Buddhist sites, such as Borobudur—the economy is not saturated with performing arts-based cultural tourism to the extent that it is in Bali.

Correspondingly, much of the critical scholarly material written about internationalism and the Balinese performing arts has fallen thematically into three categories: tourism, tours, and hybridization. The works of Adrian Vickers (1989, 1996) and Michel Picard (1996, 2003) provide comprehensive overviews of tourism and artistic change in Bali in the last century. Both authors cover the political and institutional changes to Balinese society that inform changes in
cultural tourism as well as discrete changes to performing arts forms and contexts themselves. In this dissertation, I draw on these authors’ analyses of institutional change in Bali, particularly from the 1950s-1970s, but focus more on how these changes affected arts education as a part of the greater Balinese musical ecosystem. There are studies on tourism and Balinese culture that are more site-specific, focusing mostly on tourist culture in Ubud (for example, Dunbar-Hall 2003); I draw on these studies for their framing of Balinese culture geographically, a less-common trope in performing arts studies of Bali.

Other discussions of Balinese tourism focus on the arts as a part of Bali’s broader international economic and social profile (Howe 2005, Hitchcock and Putra 2007). Comparative artistic studies (Yamashita 2003, Macy 2010) contextualize artistic tourism in Bali within the frame of tourism in Asia more broadly and in examining post-disaster economies, respectively. While the theoretical contexts (tourism versus education) are different, the transnational perspectives of these works have influenced my consideration of Balinese culture in context. Additionally, Macy’s contextualization of her own experiences as a longtime student of Lasmawan is important in framing my study both theoretically and more content-specifically. Tourism has formed a crucial part of the Balinese performing arts as an ecosystem; redefining Balinese culture for presentation to tourists has also spurred on the institutionalization of the arts, conservatory culture, and in part brought American musicians to study in Bali. While not as negative as certain early writers about the Balinese tourist industry, I critique the role that tourism has played in Balinese and Balinese-American arts education, particularly in the evocation of “the real Bali” in a touristic versus pedagogical setting.

In many ways, the converse of tourism in Bali has been musical tours out from Bali. One of the earliest (and still most thorough) studies of Balinese performing arts tours outside of Indonesia is found in John Coast’s Dancing Out of Bali (Coast 1953). This book tells the story of the musical tours of a dance troupe from Peliatan in the early 1950s—a tour that Coast helped arrange and of which he was intimately a part. As is documented in the works of Colin McPhee (McPhee 1966), one interesting aspect of the tour’s construction was the explicit artistic input of its non-Balinese arrangers. Matthew Isaac Cohen’s Performing Otherness: Java and Bali on International Stages, 1905-1952 (2011) provides a theoretical-historical study of a similar subject: Indonesian and Indonesian-imitating artists performing on Western concert stages. The work focuses on interrelated themes of colonialization, “otherness” (Cohen 2011: 21),
orientalism, and representation. Explicitly critical of these examples of the representations of the Balinese arts, Cohen aims to reveal the extent to which Balineseness (kebalian) has been co-opted for a Western audience. The perspectives of Coast and Cohen are of interest to this study in conceptualizing the historical depth of Balinese-foreign cultural interrelation and because, quite often, they represent the type of cultural misappropriation that modern pedagogues seek to avoid.

More recent accounts of Balinese-foreign musical engagements are offered in writings by Andrew McGraw on musik kontemporer, Indonesian avant garde music (McGraw 2013), which traces the history and development of the genre, including how it was influenced by US-Indonesian political and cultural interactions from the Cold War era of the 1950s and 1960s onward. He examines the history of financial support to Balinese and Javanese kontemporer artists as a tool to bolster support for American and democratic ideals within Indonesia. Documenting economic support both given directly to Indonesian educational institutions and for individual Indonesian artists to pursue higher education in the United States, McGraw is primarily concerned with the historical ramifications of this support on the development of musik kontemporer. However, through this historical analysis as well as anecdotes from his contemporary kontemporer colleagues who have taught foreign students in the United States and in Bali, McGraw hints at a continuing emphasis on gamelan pedagogy as a part of the US-Indonesian economic and cultural relationship. McGraw’s work, with its focus on the politics of individual cultural representation and that sought by Balinese institutions, shows compositional correlations between tradition, institutionalization, and foreign-derived thought; in doing so, it functions as a paradigm for my own studies.

Works on Balinese gamelan music in America have most often focused on cross-compositional techniques and results with little consideration cultural context or ethnographic detail (the exception being Lueck 2012, discussed below). Until the past few years, the sole prolific writer on American Balinese gamelan scenes was ethnomusicologist Jody Diamond. Drawing from her own perspective as an American composer influenced by both Javanese and Balinese musical idioms, her writings focus on the aesthetics of cross-cultural composition and performance (Diamond 1990, 1991, 1992, 1998). She suggests that despite differences in local performance practices, there should be no discrimination in terms of discussion of compositional or performance practice of artists working in the same idiom (gamelan) in different areas of the
world. Echoing the recent conceptions in ethnomusicology of the negation of the separation between “self” and “other” (Nettl 2005: 149-160), Diamond broadly posits the idea of an international music scene that freely involves the transmission of ideas and the transfer of people. Within this larger theme, Diamond also examines the particular artistic choices of Indonesian and American gamelan musicians (Diamond 1991, 1992, 1998), as well as the challenges and possibilities they see in their works. Michael Tenzer additionally echoes some of these cross-compositional sentiments in music theoretical analyses of a newly-composed Balinese piece, “Wilet Mayura,” examining the form, structure, and melodic topics of the piece in comparison with a Mozart string quartet, a jazz piece by Jaki Byard and George Tucker, and Witold Lutoslawski’s Third Symphony (Tenzer 2000). Michael Bakan illuminates this issue from the other side in World Music: Traditions and Transformations, in which an American-composed piece combining elements of beleganjur and hip-hop serves as an example in a textbook (Bakan 2012). Outside of a compositional context, Tenzer’s Balinese Gamelan Music includes a short discussion of the international careers of some Balinese gamelan musicians.

The logical extension of the seeds of ideas presented in these works—to examine cross-cultural composition between Balinese and non-Balinese artists—was taken on by Peter Steele in his dissertation “Balinese Hybridities: Balinese Music as Global Phenomena” [sic] (2013). Steele takes modern composition practices and products as the focus of his study, but is most concerned with musical “hybridity”—the exchange and combination of musical forces to form “hybrids,” “a third space” (Bhabha 1994) outside the totalizing cultural systems that have produced its component parts. He also discusses hybridity in terms of “awkward engagement” (Tsing 2005) and, in technologically based music, gamelan as cyborgs within a primitive-futuristic compositional world (Steele 2013: 92). His other primary theoretical framework is that to consider Balinese cultural elements and ideas as memes, because they are transmitted from person to person in a way that is conceived of as not geographically-bounded (Steele 2013: 243) or being indicative of coherent cultural structures (Steele 2013: 140).

Instead of drawing on the ideas of hybridity or memes for my subject matter, I conceptualize Balinese gamelans within the international sphere as occupying not a third space but a central place; they are integral to gamelan culture overall. The culture created within transnational academic gamelan contexts does combine musical and cultural elements that are both American and Balinese; however, this combination is integral not as a deviation from...
American or Balinese traditions but rather a central connecting force contradicts the idea of “Balinese” or “American” gamelans as distinct entities.

1.4.3 World Music Pedagogy: Teaching and Representing Balinese Music

The issues of representation and hybridity presented through tourism, tours, and cross-cultural composition are not unconnected to the concerns of gamelan pedagogues, and the interactions between Balinese and foreign cultural arts within these contexts provide a backdrop for my study. However, placing Balinese music in an academic setting—whether it is Indonesian or non-Indonesian—carries different connotations. In an explicitly pedagogical setting, an instructor’s every word, every musical demonstration, becomes a canon for the students. In addition, institutions of higher education hold the power of official representation. Understanding how world music pedagogy and specifically Balinese gamelan pedagogy becomes a form of musical, cultural, and political capital is a central focus of this study.

Teaching world music courses and especially world music ensembles has become a vital part of the job descriptions for many ethnomusicologists and other scholars in American institutions of higher education, amplified further in recent years by institutional trends towards having “multicultural” course credit requirements. Academic institutions in the United States have come a long way since George Herzog and Jaap Kunst published their directories of institutions offering courses and degrees in world music, respectively (Herzog 1936, Kunst 1959); today, there are almost forty colleges and universities in the United States that grant degrees in ethnomusicology, and many more that house music ensembles reflecting non-Western music traditions.12

The trend towards teaching world music courses can be traced to individuals such as Herzog who, in the 1930s, was among the first to adapt European conceptions of comparative musicology and the study of “primitive” musics to American classroom settings. However, it was Mantle Hood’s foundation of the first world music ensembles at the University of California-Los Angeles in 1958 that began a movement towards formalized study of foreign musics in an American university setting (Conner 2011). (The university began with instruments from Java, Thailand, Japan, and Sunda; the Balinese music ensemble began one year later, in

12 This statistic is based upon my own research through internet searches for degree-granting programs in ethnomusicology; therefore, there are at least this many institutions that offer ethnomusicology degrees, and perhaps many more.
Hood’s dedication to the idea that scholars of non-Western musics should learn to play the musics that they study is enshrined in “The Challenge of Bi-Musicality” (Hood 1960) and other publications by Hood, most notably “Music, the Unknown” (in the multi-authored 1963 volume Musicology, co-authored by Frank Harrison, Claude Palisca, and Hood) and The Ethnomusicologist (1971/1982); today, hundreds of “world music” ensembles are enjoyed by students, scholars, and the general public across the nation.

However, this explosion of world music pedagogy (and especially ensemble pedagogy) has not been matched by publications on the subject. Classic theoretical texts in ethnomusicology tend to be more closely concerned with issues in ethnomusicological research: ethnographic fieldwork, music theoretical analysis, or frameworks for cultural analysis (Barz and Cooley 2008, Merriam 1964, Myers 1992, Nettl 2005, and others). This lack of scholarly focus on performance and pedagogy resonate with a fundamental concern that many Balinese musicians and non-Balinese gamelan enthusiasts have expressed to me: that ethnomusicologists are too focused on cultural theory and not focused enough on performance.

There are exceptions within the literature. Some individual works on specific musical traditions discuss pedagogical issues of teaching these musics to foreigners; others, such as the third edition of Multicultural Perspectives in Music Education (Anderson and Campbell 2011) focus on incorporating a variety of world music traditions, including kecak, into primary and secondary education.13 Examinations of transnational Balinese music pedagogy (Balinese teachers instructing non-Balinese students) can be found in some of the historical works about the Balinese performing arts (DeZoete and Spies 1939; McPhee 1963) and a more extensive description co-written by both Balinese and foreign writers can be found in Balinese Dance, Drama and Music: a Guide to the Performing Arts of Bali by I Wayan Dibia and Rucina Ballinger (2004). With the growing popularity of reflexivity in ethnomusicology in the late 1990s and early 2000s, many recent ethnographic writings on Bali and other culture-areas present at least a short discussion on the author’s own experiences in learning the music (see Bakan 1999 for a particularly in-depth example). However, these personal inclusions, while used to serve larger points being made in each work, rarely touch extensively or systematically upon the larger phenomenon of teaching world music to non-native musicians. Once again, there are some exceptions; Bakan’s article “Lessons from a World: Balinese Applied Music Instruction

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13 There are several sections, including ones written by Bakan and coauthored by Bakan and Anderson.
and the Teaching of Western ‘Art’ Music” (Bakan 1993) not only describes in detail the Balinese methods of teaching, but also suggests how these differing, non-Western techniques might be instructional in teaching Western classical music.

The most comprehensive written source on modern world music pedagogy is Performing Ethnomusicology: Teaching and Representation in World Music Ensembles (Solís 2004). Although the book as a whole has been influential to the development of this dissertation, the chapters on gamelan specifically have been most pertinent to the study. As a music of the “great traditions”—one that has “clear familial links across broad regions” and has a lengthy legacy within the world music pedagogy canon (Solís 2004: 8)—gamelan music is the subject of five of the fifteen chapters in the volume. Only one of these chapters, written by David Harnish, concerns itself with Balinese gamelan. Each of the chapters is framed primarily as an essay by each of the authors about their personal experiences as instructors of world music ensembles.

Three of the contributing authors in Performing Ethnomusicology write as non-native performers of gamelan music: Roger Vetter, David Harnish, and J. Lawrence Witzleben. All have had long careers as gamelan ensemble instructors. Although the three have different backgrounds and experiences, they focus on similar issues in their writings: reflections on their own learning processes, goals for student learning in terms of performance and cultural knowledge, and issues of representation and authenticity in teaching style and performance presentation. Two chapters—those written by Sumarsam and Hardja Susilo—reflect many of the same concerns but from a different perspective: that of native Javanese musicians who ultimately became career gamelan teachers in the United States. Sumarsam’s chapter includes much of the historical information found in his book (above); his personal reflections, like those of Susilo described below, provide a quick glimpse into the type of documentation I aim for with Lasmawan.

Susilo was one of the first of Mantle Hood’s students at UCLA, the first to teach Javanese gamelan at that institution, and he has continued to teach Javanese and Balinese gamelan for many years at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. In an interview with the gamelan teacher conducted by David Harnish, Ted Solís, and J. Lawrence Witzleben, Susilo raises many of the issues that I likewise discuss in chronicling Lasmawan’s life: decisions on how to impart musical and cultural ideals, the challenges of maintaining an academic ensemble, how he has become a “bridge” to Indonesia, and adapting teaching styles to the students (Harnish, Solís, and
Witzleben: 53-67). He mentions, but does not develop, two issues of particular interest to my research. One is the fact that:

Unlike the other [ethnic] ensembles, whose members are largely people from that particular ethnic group, most members of our gamelan ensemble are non-Javanese, non-Balinese. They are mostly Americans of different ethnic extractions. The few Indonesians that we have had in the group have not been the backbones of the group, except when they are invited guest teachers (Susilo in Harnish, Solís, and Witzleben 2004: 59)

Given the small number of ethnic Indonesians within the United States, this relative paucity of native players is unsurprising. Additionally, Susilo’s observations that American gamelan culture in some ways makes little cultural distinction between Javanese and Balinese art forms (both serve the same world music ensemble function) suggests that while there are distinctions that can be found in the community connections the gamelans foster, there is also a sense of pan-Indonesian culture that might not be found within Indonesia itself.

The dedication of American gamelan performers to this art, however, begs another question: why are they playing gamelan in particular, and how are their experiences interrelated with those of the Indonesian musicians involved in the international web of gamelan activities? Solís suggests that students in world music ensembles enroll in them as an “‘experience ensemble’ [where] students here embrace a second (cultural) childhood, akin to the sort of entirely new musical experience most musicians underwent as children with their first piano lessons or sixth-grade band” (Solís 2004: 7). The resulting experience is to explore new musical worlds. As for why musicians stay, Andrew McGraw suggested one answer to the first half of that question in an interview with the New York Times:

Bali still serves as an icon of the mysterious premodern East…It satisfies a neo-liberal nostalgia for community and spirituality. Gamelan in the U.S. is as much, if not more, a story about us than an accurate representation of Indonesian culture (McGraw, quoted in Pellegrini 2010).

This quick answer, of course, represents neither the whole story nor McGraw’s entire perspective. Another suggestion that gamelan scholars have recently made is to contextualize the non-Indonesian gamelan experience in terms of “affinity groups.” The term was prominently introduced into ethnomusicology by Mark Slobin to mean “charmed circles of like-minded music-makers drawn magnetically to a certain genre that creates strong expressive bonding”
(Slobin 1992: 72). It has been adapted widely in recent scholarship about gamelan music outside of Indonesia. In her dissertation “Javanese Gamelan in Britain: Communitas, Affinity, and Other Stories,” Maria Mendonça adopts the term as her primary theoretical lens for describing Javanese gamelan groups composed mostly of like-minded British musicians (Mendonça 2002). Ellen Lueck adopted the term in her recent master’s thesis, *Sekaha Gong Amerika: Affinity and Balinese Gamelan Community in the United States and Canada* (Lueck 2012), in which she further investigates the tipping point between “musical affinity” and “musical identity.”¹⁴ (These two works also provide some of the more comprehensive descriptions of teaching gamelan to non-Indonesians).

To some extent, my work illustrates and embraces the idea of expatriate gamelan culture in terms of affinity and a certain type of community seeking—most accurate to describe the distinct cultures of different ensembles. The idea of affinity, however, must be nuanced with respect to the larger transnational gamelan community. While Lueck is correct in her assessment that American gamelan groups remain in relative isolation to one another, and in general also to musical groups in Bali (Lueck 2012), Susilo’s self-identification as a “bridge to Java” begins to tear down that illusion. Individuals—Balinese teachers, American ethnomusicologists, American gamelan students who move to new cities and seek out the local gamelan group—these individuals provide in-person connections between physical, established gamelan ensembles. The people are the networks; the gamelans and the institutions who house them, the nodes. This is not to even mention the prevalence and sharing of gamelan multimedia on internet sites such as YouTube, which ideologically links gamelan musicians and dancers, Balinese and not, across the world.

A second issue arises in using the term affinity to describe these primarily foreign gamelan cultures: the assumption that all gamelan groups in America are affinitive and all gamelan groups in Indonesian are non-affinitive. In Slobin’s original work, he contrasts the affinity groups with “bands,” whose members play as part of a livelihood. Academic gamelan groups in America may have members who join out of like-minded interest—or the students may be fulfilling a course requirement. Although academic gamelan groups in the United States rarely play solely for profit, both community groups and academic groups may charge entrance fees to

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¹⁴ Steele also considers the term, but models his research more closely on the ideas of musical “hybrids” and “memes.”
perpetuate their group livelihood or pay their teachers—a purpose beyond affinity. Looking to Bali, gamelan music in Bali is the predominant force in local religious musical culture—a category outside of Slobin’s purview—as well as being social and entertaining. However, that does not imply that performing gamelan music specifically—moreover, playing with or teaching foreigners—is not a matter of affinitive choice. Finally, although “affinity” may function as a concept to describe how non-Balinese musicians become interested in gamelan and why they continue to play, other aspects of these community connections—such as mutual obligations and created kinships, both musical and cultural (described in section 1.4.4)—better indicate the long-term social bonds that can arise within transnational gamelan communities. Although Lueck and Mendonça identify some of these faults with adopting the term, there are others that I raise through my subsequent discussions.

Returning to the interview with Susilo, he raises another interesting point: the difference between community groups and university settings. He notes that:

Unfortunately the university setting, the setting that I have been associated with, limits your learning period…community gamelan provides continuity, as well as a pleasant and somewhat stress-free learning environment. It simulates the learning environment found in Javanese and Balinese community groups (Susilo in Harnish, Solís, and Witzleben 2004: 58).

Lueck expands on this difference between academic and community groups in more ethnographic detail, documenting differences in funding, leadership, and structure between the ensembles (Lueck 2012: 22-42). To some extent, she traces connections between the two groups—mainly, the community group as a more-serious or post-college alternative for those seeking a different type of gamelan experience. However, as a master’s thesis, its scope is focused more on the task of illuminating the experience of American students learning Balinese gamelan in America—like Mendonça’s dissertation (on gamelan in the U.K.), focusing more specifically on the impact of community groups. In my work, I explore the interrelationship of academic and community groups and the individuals who populate them, drawing explicit connections between the individuals in these groups and affiliated ones in Bali.

1.4.4 Connections: Musical Kinships

In Bali, familial relationships form a central part of the structural framework of society. Lineages of biological kinship—through descent or through marriage—help determine who
belongs where, is related to whom, and what one individual’s social obligations are to another (Geertz 1975, Eiseman 1990). Identifying an individual’s family members, in tandem with identifying their geographical origin (region and village), contextualizes that person within the complex interrelated sets of Balinese social signifiers. Although there are many ways in which Balinese society subdivides itself and its lineages, biological kinship—recreating the standing generational social order—is of prime importance (Geertz and Geertz 1975). For musicians and dancers, the region where they studied is crucial to inflecting their performances with certain types of styles; musical lineages ensure that these styles and genres are passed down to the next generation. Because the different geographic regions in Bali have distinctive musical differences and particular teachers are renowned for certain repertoires, maintaining and establishing a musical lineage is important (Dibia and Ballinger 2004).

The importance of establishing student-teacher relationships—in a musical-social sense as well as in the types of material learned through these relationships—is common in musical cultures throughout the world, especially those where musical training is associated with a hereditary element, such as in the Wolof griot tradition of Senegal (Tang 2007). Perhaps the best-known example of this type of musical lineage tracing can be found in the North Indian classical music traditions, in which khandan (family or clan) refers to the bloodlines (descent or marriages) within musical families. Related and even better-known is the gharana system in which the teacher (guru), a descendant of a particular musical lineage, teaches lineage-specific raga (melodic systems) and their associated cultural meanings to his or her students (Ruckert 2004: 36). Individuals perpetuate these generations-old musical lineages by teaching new students; they add their own “stamp” to the lineage through their own musical development (Deshpande 1973: 15). The gharana system was historically associated with royal courts and thus implies certain geographic associations as well (Ruckert 2004: 36).

Modern Balinese Hindu performing arts lineages are very distantly related cousins to those of India. In Balinese gamelan, stylistic playing characteristics are handed down from teachers to students, regional stylistic differences are audible in individuals’ playing styles, and musicians and spectators alike will note the difference in ornamentation or sound of musicians from different regions. There is no formal, codified system in place to the same extent as with the gharana, and Balinese musicians do not as strictly acknowledge a single, distinct lineage as their primary influence. However, the transfer of musical and cultural knowledge from teacher,
to student, to student’s students is often described as *air mengalir*—literally “running water,” but almost with the idea of water running over, running through—information passed down that is bears the same stylistic lineage, but also carriers the traces of change from each generation of teachers and learners.

Tracing the gharana lineages of modern individuals in Indian classical music, such as Ravi Shankar, who taught extensively both in India and the West (Farrell 1997, Shankar 1968), helps to illustrate the musical and cultural influence of a single individual. I borrow this idea of lineages, represented graphically as a family tree, to show the relationships between teacher and student, and to illuminate points of musical and cultural adaptation. I suggest that this model, in addition to demonstrating the historical development and continued musical connections between gamelan groups and individuals within them, also represents continuing social ties that create a counter-influential, transnational gamelan culture.

**1.4.5 Connections: Constructing Gamelan Geographies**

Ideas of place, time, and mobility are central to this study for several reasons. First, in attempting to describe an actively transnational community, it is important to understand where individuals live, where they visit, and how their bodies, ideas, and musical-pedagogical influences move and connect. One way of looking at these connections is geographically. Questions of place and mobility are of interest within any artistic community that transcends its original geographic boundaries. However, the case of Bali is a particularly interesting one in that ideas of geographical and temporal relationships within Bali are related directly to Balinese Hinduism and the social practices that the Balinese Hindus have built around these beliefs. The question of adapting artistic practice—philosophically suited to Balinese traditional lifestyles—outside of Bali is a fascinating one. Finally, the transnational Balinese gamelan community, as one of the more venerable world music traditions to be established in North America, provides an interesting opportunity to examine world music pedagogy more broadly as a geographical force.

In reconceptualizing non-Bali-located performing groups as central to the current traditional Balinese performing arts community, this dissertation investigates the importance of place to Balinese culture and its traditional performance styles, as well as more broadly examining ways that time, place, and an individual’s or community’s interaction with these ideas may be fruitful for ethnomusicological study. Investigating the Balinese gamelan community
both in terms of nodes (single salient locations) and networks (flows of people, musical ideas, capital, etc. between these nodes), I suggest that the community can best be modeled and understood through a mobile place-geography. Here, I examine the literature on place and mobility more generally; below, I address three more specific concepts: diaspora, globalization, and cosmopolitanism.

Theoretical conceptions of place and movement have come to the fore in a number of academic disciplines in recent years, especially as the concept of globalization became an increasingly popularized concept for describing perceived changes in the ways that individuals and groups have come to relate to each other in a global context at the end of the twentieth century. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, cultural geography has been one of the first and most active academic disciplines in considering the importance of place in relation to human activity, and is still one of the most central disciplines in formulating place, space, and mobility as themes to consider within academic discourse.

“Place” is such an everyday word that it has both multiple, distinct meanings and is often left undefined. A basic understanding of place that is compatible with most other theoretical definitions is suggested by political geographer John Agnew (1987), who posits that place consists of three primary aspects:

1. Location—a fixed point (although not necessarily stationary).
2. Locale—a surrounding material setting; a physical layout and context.
3. Sense of place—subjective, emotional attachments of people; the human recognition that it is a place distinct from other places.

Understanding human conceptions of place in terms of locale and sense of place form many subsections of the current inquiry of human geography. In this dissertation, I examine place more specifically from several different scholarly frameworks, in addition to situating my discussions within Balinese Hindu religious-cultural time/place paradigms. The first of these scholarly approaches to describing place is the relationship of place and mobility. Within cultural geography, there have been two common ways of looking at the relationship of place and mobility. The first is to view mobility as contrary to place. One of the earliest geographers to address this question was Yi-fu Tuan, who viewed “place” as “pause” and “space” as movement; that “each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place” (Tuan 1977: 6). In this conception, non-movement is where meaning is built; the space between
places—travel, for example—does not carry meaning or sense of place to the same extent that a static location does. A number of subsequent geographical works pick up on mobility and movement as either the “un-place” or in fact, dangerous to ideas of place. Marxist geographer David Harvey, for example, views space as fixed capital that is in constant tension with other forms of flexible capital, such as mass communication and transportation (Harvey 1996). In Harvey’s conception, the modern “hypermobilities” make it necessary for places to defend themselves against the onslaught of these flexible forms of capital, requiring “effort to evoke a sense of place and of the past [that] is now often deliberate and conscious” (Harvey 1996: 302).

In this dissertation, these ideas of fixed-versus-flexible are crucial to my understanding of Balinese music-in-motion, particularly in terms of the idea of creating places that are “authentic”—central to the ideas of traditionalism and the self-creation of Bali as a cultural space as well as evoking the “authenticity” of Bali-as-space through pedagogical and performative recreations of Bali within the United States.

However, instead of regarding travel or inter-place movement as either a non-place or a threat to specific places, I follow other scholars who embrace mobility as central to understanding place—such as the work of Doreen Massey, who posits that instead of conceiving of place in a static manner, that place is a process, a coming together of different flows (Massey 1994) of the people, goods, and ideas that move across the globe. Massey suggests that place should be viewed as a balance between geographical attachment—an idea of place, of home—and movement, travel as a way of life. This idea has been developed by a number of other scholars, most notably anthropologist James Clifford in Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century (Clifford 1997). This book, a series of essays, follows the flows of people and their cultures across the globe, highlighting in particular the representations of non-Western people and goods across the globe, either by themselves or others. Following these examples, I also conceptualize place as movement, and consider the movement of the performer-teachers, their students, and Balinese musical ideas to be central not only to differentiating static places from each other, but also to conceiving this flux and flow as crucial to the development of individual places, nodes, within the network of the transnational Balinese gamelan scene.

I adopt a slightly modified perspective from the flow idea. The idea of “flow” implies the free movement of knowledge and culture between places, whereas cultural encounters are rarely fluid, their points of confluence—often in the in-between spaces—constituting defining moments.
of cultural renegotiation. In this sense, I build on ideas expressed in Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing’s book *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Tsing 2005). Tsing describes globalization as a process that occurs not as a single, disembodied force, not a clash of cultures, but a series of interactions within “zones of awkward engagement” (Tsing 2005: xi) in which interested parties from all over the globe serve as active participants in the making of local choices. The interactions between these entities—which other scholars have previously described in terms of flow—Tsing instead describes as being the result of friction, tension built between different parties. Although much of the cultural exchange that I describe in my dissertation does not involve the political tensions described in Tsing’s work on the Indonesian rainforests, the idea of cultural negotiation as part of an active, place-oriented but not place-bounded cultural interexchange is central to my conceptualizations of place and social interaction within the transnational Balinese gamelan community.

Historically preceding but similar to Tsing’s “zone of awkward engagement” is the use of the term “structure of the conjuncture,” which has taken on slightly different meanings when used by different scholars. Here, I draw primarily on its usage by anthropologist Marshall Sahlins in *Islands of History*, a book of essays examining historical intersections between Europeans and natives of several Pacific island cultures. The idea of “structure of the conjuncture” is useful to take in turn with the “zone of awkward engagement” because it emphasizes not only the *event*, the meeting of multiple cultural entities, but also the role that these entities’ societal structures (society-based modes of thinking and interpretation) have on their actions and interpretation of events that unfold (Sahlins 1985: xiv). Additionally, Sahlins highlights the role of chance in these encounters as a catalyst, which is less prominent in the writings of cultural theorists before than since the 1980s. Concepts of individual and social structure and thought and action—posed not as dichotomies, but as constantly interacting modes of behaving—are central to understanding the impetuses of different members of the transnational Balinese performing arts community.

Returning to the idea of place, it is a concept that is also important to consider in a performative sense. The idea of the performance of place can be taken in two ways: first, that in a daily sense, place is constituted by the “performance” of human action on a geographical location (de Certeau 1984); that place is created by our actions. In this sense, the act of having a regularly-practicing Balinese performing arts group marks the place in which the group exists,
and transforms that place into being linked to Bali. More specifically, however, I want to suggest that performance itself is a place that, while geographically and temporally mediated, provides a direct, non-geographic linkage to other performances of similar material. By enacting Balinese culture, gamelans in the United States remain site-oriented, but culturally link themselves to Bali.

Above, I have considered primarily geographic and anthropological perceptions of how place functions conceptually within society. However, studying the idea of place or geography specifically within a musical context has become a growing area of interest in the last decade. To some extent, most ethnomusicological works deal implicitly with the idea of place in that they provide “thick description” (Geertz 1973: 3-32) about musical cultures as they live within a certain locational context. In terms of conceptualizing “place” as a theoretical angle, however, there are a number of works that suggest how musical form, content, and conditions for composition and performance reflect natural and urban influence and micro-geographies (see, for example, Leyshon, Matless, and Revill 1998; Mackinlay, Bartleet, and Barney 2007; Richards 2007; Roman-Velazquez 1999; Schafer 1977; Von Glahn 2003).

In large part, the idea of musical movement between places within specifically ethnomusicological works has either been modeled as diffusive (Hadley 2007, McGraw 2005) or diasporic (Lipsitz 1994, Myers 1999, Slobin 2011, Stokes and Bohlman 2003, Zheng 2010). Modern terminologies of Western academics—fusion, hybrid, neotraditional, globalized, cosmopolitan, postmodern, appropriation, symbolic topography—crisscross these works. However, drawing these new geographies as extensions of musical-social structures in the home country—and in fact, as being cross-informative with those home structures—is relatively rare. There are several other issues related to using diffusion and diaspora as paradigms for explaining Balinese gamelan culture internationally. While Bali is still considered to be home to the music culture at hand, subject to yearly or bi-yearly pilgrimages by natives and enthusiasts alike, there is no overwhelming sense of separation from home, nor the idea of a precise-as-possible recreation of home abroad; surrounded by non-Balinese, America becomes a distinct space. Neither is Balinese culture diffuse; although contexts for learning and performance differ widely between the United States and Bali (and within these two locations), Balinese culture is purposely sought out, the ways its learners engage with it re-mixing the music and culture itself. This type of agency is central to my conception of mobility of ideas and individuals in the
transnational Balinese pedagogical community as well as its potential as a model for understanding globalization and cosmopolitanism.

1.4.6 On Globalization and Cosmopolitanism

In recent years, “globalization” has become a popular term to encompass any number of social, cultural, economic and political phenomena that involve worldwide connections and often the sense of compression of time and space explored above. In a globalized society, cultural, political, and economic forms of capital are inherently mobile. They move through different means; Arjun Appadurai’s *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* posits a now-standard set of “scapes” through which globalized influences flow. These non-geographically-based modes of ideological discourse are: ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes (Appadurai 1995). Twenty-plus years after Appadurai’s introduction of this paradigm, it still provides a useful way of analyzing the flows of social interchange between connected sites worldwide.

However, globalization as a word has been used so broadly within recent scholarship that it in large part has lost a specific meaning and identity as a social process. Massey points out that globalization as an umbrella idea does not differentiate between different abilities and attitudes in terms of international engagement and mobility (Massey 1994). Recently, theoretical writings have begun to focus on globalization as a process in which individual people and institutions embodied in distinct sites are more active, thus ameliorating this issue.

One example is the aforementioned work by Tsing. The development of a definition for globalism throughout the book is subtle—at once advertised as “a commitment to the global” (Tsing 2005: 58) but also an expression of feelings of the universal assembled from distinct local priorities expressed on a global scale. Through ethnographic description of units from small village councils to the United Nations, Tsing demonstrates how globalism is enacted within different situations. In sharing the discussions of groups from different backgrounds, she demonstrates a profound principle of globalism: that there exists a global set of knowledge and references from which any globally connected person can draw to support their opinions and choices. She also suggests that “there is no reason to assume that collaborators share goals” (Tsing 2005: 13), providing a paradigm for assessing how individuals embody self-agency.

The difference between ability and power within a globalized system can be found in works such as “Globalizing Languages: Ideologies and Realities of the Contemporary Global
System,” by Jonathan Friedman (2003). He suggests that one result of globalization is the embodiment of representational power through the process of “vertical polarization” within a society—that is, a set of transnational, elite groups that are “authorized” either by international connections or government backing to represent their local culture to the world (Friedman 2003: 745-746). The idea of representation being an important aspect of globalized culture comes to the fore in the work Ethnicity, Inc. by John L. and Jean Comaroff (2009). Examining the use of cultural heritage as marketing tool in a diverse set of social groups around the world, they demonstrate how geographically rooted communities “appropriate pastness” to sell cultural authenticity. Drawing on local heritage to project a specific image to the world at large, these groups are able to solidify and redefine their own cultural heritage. In the transnational Balinese music pedagogy world, a composite of the paradigms elaborated above—of individual agents who redefine their own culture, using their position as cultural experts to be the authorized voices of the Balinese musical community—is an idea that I will suggest fits the positions of the Balinese performer-pedagogues.

If we take globalization to be the transnational diffusion of cultural content that was created and disseminated by individual people or institutions from different locations, the question remains: what types of people are consuming this culture? One way to refer to these consumers of (presumably) many different snippets of globalized culture is “cosmopolitan.” The term itself derives from two Ancient Greek words, “cosmos” (universe) and “polis” (city), and was used by the Stoics to articulate the ideal of replacing the polis as the center of communal life, instead focusing on the universal equality within a community encompassing all of humanity (Held 2010). As expressed in current Western theories of political science, a modern sense of cosmopolitanism includes not only these connotations of equality, but also more physical senses of communications through global systems of technology, markets, ideas, and the impinging of multiple local “worlds” upon each other (Held 2010: 53-69).

Definitions of the word “cosmopolitanism” in Indonesian reflect a similarly diverse set of principles. “Cosmopolitan” and “cosmopolitanism” correspond to no original single word in Indonesian (the current language favored by the more internationally minded Indonesians, as opposed to regional languages). However, in addition to the direct loan-words such as “kosmopolit” and “internasional,” the word can have several multi-word translations. “Tersebar di seluruh dunia”—spread all around the world—evokes the idea of a multinational spread of
ideas. “Orang yang berpandangan internasional” covers the usage of “cosmopolitan” as a noun, and means most closely “an internationally minded person.” Lastly, “warga dunia,” or “citizen of the world” is also a possible translation.

As ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino writes of cosmopolitanism in Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe, cosmopolitanism is always “simultaneously local and translocal” (Turino 2000: 7). Rooted in the daily lives of individuals, cosmopolitanism is a purposeful incorporation of a foreign ideal into the idea of self (not unrelated to Mendonça’s discussions of music and affinity). Historically, this embrace of cosmopolitan ideas has been identified with urban areas rather than with rural areas, which are often considered to be more traditional in their culture (Turino 2000:32). However, the Indonesian translations of the term give no sense of the idea of the “city” as being important. Indeed, while the courts of the great Indonesian kingdoms created population concentrations that were much more dense and diverse than in the desa, the transformation of these courts into the modern kota (city) in Indonesia has occurred only over the last hundred years. While individuals in less urban areas—such as Lasmawan describes in Tabanan—may have more conservative artistic tastes than those in urban areas, international, cosmopolitan culture is within their reach, thanks to modern types of mass communication. Like in the Comaroffs’ writings, “tradition” is a theme that anyone can embrace whether they are from rural or urban areas; cosmopolitanism is more of a philosophy (see discussion in Bakan 1999: 170-208).

Viewing cosmopolitanism and globalization as processes deriving from choices that individuals make on the local, regional, and transnational level implicates an inherent interconnectivity between individuals and institutions, the local and the global, being place-bound and mobile, and cultural tradition and its transformations. In this study, I illuminate these complex webs of connections, choices, and cultural influences within transnational Balinese gamelan pedagogy-based communities. In focusing outward from the stories and lives of individuals within Lasmawan’s community, I demonstrate how these individuals transform gamelan culture—in the United States and in Bali—in their different ways and according to different motivations, priorities, and constraints, despite (and because of) their attention to nurturing the continuity of this performance tradition. Finally, although the means of cultural transformation—through international travel, via YouTube and Facebook—may be modern, I
emphasize how more traditional conceptions of social structure such as musical kinship may offer a useful paradigm for examining these transnational cultures.

1.5 Chapter Synopses

In this dissertation I provide a reverse telescopic view of pedagogy and performance within the Balinese international performing arts community, proceeding from the individual to the communal, the concrete to the theoretical. Chapter One has provided an introduction to Bali and its musical cultures as well as laid out the parameters, scholarly context, and methodology for this work. Chapter Two introduces the central figure in this case study, I Madé Lasmawan, provides a history of how he came to be called “the Johnny Appleseed of American gamelan,” and outlines what his American social and pedagogical commitments entail. Chapter Three provides a deeper introduction to Lasmawan’s musical lifeworld in Bali, delving more deeply into the current types of musical and social connections he maintains between Bali and the United States, and also documents in detail his pedagogical approach to teaching foreign students within a Balinese context.

Chapter Four, entitled “Learning and Teaching ‘Sumiar,’” goes into ethnographic and analytical detail regarding Lasmawan’s teaching of a piece that he composed, exploring how different demographics of students learned the piece in different contexts. Functioning as a kind of “interlude” within the overall structure of the dissertation, this chapter examines the impact of Lasmawan’s work upon his students, family members, and future gamelan teachers.

Chapter Five is devoted to reflections from Lasmawan’s students and colleagues-in-teaching. These students, who range in age from teenagers to near-seniors and their length of time working with Lasmawan (from a few months to over twenty years), were chosen to illuminate different facets of Lasmawan’s teaching career since he moved to the United States. Their stories highlight different locations and phases of Lasmawan’s work, pedagogical and philosophical differences between academic and community ensembles, connections between gamelans in the United States and in Bali, and a number of distinct perspectives on how studying Balinese gamelan has changed their own lives and their place in overlapping, gamelan-related communities.

Drawing together narratives and theoretical ideas introduced in chapters two through five, Chapter Six situates the pedagogical choices and community connections that shape Lasmawan’s interconnected gamelans within the broader frameworks of Balinese gamelan pedagogy to
foreigners and world music pedagogy in general. In addition to viewing these choices from a more abstract, structural viewpoint, it focuses on Lasmawan’s own perspectives on his work. The conclusion of the chapter discusses a theme central to Lasmawan’s philosophy and goals—the cultivation of “the next generation” of gamelan players.

Chapter Seven takes a still-broader view of the international Balinese gamelan educational phenomenon, examining the local and global institutional connections that have shaped the Balinese performing arts, both in Bali and beyond. It situates individual teachers in general and Lasmawan in particular as agents within this larger bureaucratic network, highlighting how individuals’ lives shaped and were shaped by these larger institutional forces and illuminating how institutional power structures privilege and reward individuals with certain educational backgrounds, philosophies, advantages, and disadvantages. Finally, the chapter examines the impact that these international, institutional connections have had upon the content, context, and philosophy of Balinese arts performance.

The concluding eighth chapter represents the dissertation’s most far-range telescopic overview of the Balinese performing arts. Connecting concrete examples to broader theoretical concerns, it re-aposits globalization theory in terms of a system of networks of communication built and maintained through nodes (individuals and institutions). It additionally examines broader themes of kinship and geography, localities and mobilities, as represented by the Balinese case study, tying in the idea of “community” to cultural adaptation and the embrace of different local situations. Finally, the chapter repositions the idea of transnational gamelan ecosystems, examining the significance of this phrase in terms of globalized educational networks.

1.6 Contributions of the Study

In that this study explores the transnational careers of Balinese musical performers, composers, and pedagogues as normative rather than exceptional, it engages with current conceptions of diaspora theory, globalization, and cosmopolitanism, not only relative to the Balinese case study at hand but also more broadly in relationship to anthropology, ethnomusicology, and related disciplines. By exploring international Balinese gamelan pedagogy in terms of relationships between individuals and their institutions, I offer insights into the assessment of political and social effects of academically oriented musicians and scholars on not only the shape of their own educational systems, but also on perceptions of cultural and artistic
value that exist outside of academia at both local and international levels. More broadly, by viewing this international community in terms of individuals who shape the institutions—local, national, and international, formal and informal—of which they are a part, this study re-examines the impact of American educational-institutional culture on larger performing arts and social scenes, both in America and in Bali. In doing this, my study provides a model for examining other institutional-individual relationships between Western academe and other communities worldwide.

This research reaches to the heart of contemporary anthropology and ethnomusicology, providing insight not only into some of this generation’s leading theoretical concerns—globalization, cosmopolitanism, diaspora, transnational social structures, and the economic and social value of artistic exchange—but also problematizing the relationship of scholarly researchers to their “subjects.” The Indonesian performing arts in general formed an early and central part of the genesis of ethnomusicology as a modern discipline; likewise, Western models of musical education vastly influenced Indonesian (and in this case, particular Balinese) concepts of musical institutions and pedagogy in higher education. By viewing this international community in terms of individuals who shape the institutions of which they are a part—local, national, and international, formal and informal—this study re-examines the impact of American educational-institutional culture on larger performing arts and social scenes, both in America and in Bali. In doing this, it provides a model for examining institutional-individual relationships between Western academe and other communities worldwide.

While this systematic exchange of musical, pedagogical, and cultural ideas has been alluded to in a number of previous studies (Cohen 2011, Diamond 1998, Diamond 2001, Tenzer 2000, among others) and the concepts of “gamelan outside of Bali” is a growing topic of interest, this study is significant as the first to document this phenomenon from a systematic, institutional-based perspective focusing specifically on the ramifications of performing pedagogy within an international context. Additionally, it is one of few to suggest how continued connection to educational systems of the West has influenced Balinese conceptions of their own musical and educational systems.

Most importantly, this dissertation situates the Balinese performing arts as a part of an international community by illuminating how these arts—which are so central to Balinese individual, community, and spiritual life—are connected to related performing arts communities
outside of Bali through the music, stories, and lives of individuals who form them. In suggesting a dialectical rather than dichotomous relationship between groups in Bali and groups abroad, this study illuminates how their shared interrelated histories have influenced performance, educational, and social norms. In providing both systematic analysis and personal perspectives, my research helps record the recent ethnographic history of this international community, which is as-yet little documented. Finally, this work recognizes the contributions of individuals who devote their lives to Balinese musical performance and education around the world.
CHAPTER TWO

I MADÉ LASMAWAN: THE “JOHNNY APPLESEED” OF AMERICAN GAMELAN

The afternoon gamelan rehearsal was in full swing. Nearly twenty Americans and Indonesians, from teenagers to adults in their early fifties, sat at the gamelan gong kebyar instruments. They were furiously working to keep up with the fast tempo that the kendang player, the group leader, had set. This Balinese man in his mid-fifties, a performer of gamelan music for his entire life, thoughtfully watched his students as his hands flew at the drum, almost as completely of their own accord. This was I Madé Lasmawan, directing students from many of his American groups who had come over for intensive study at his home village in Bali. Although the majority of the musicians were playing in sync with each other, Lasmawan looked over to glare at the gong player—a stroke on the kemong had been late. The player recovered, but Lasmawan soon stopped the group; the transition between musical sections, led by the kendang and translated to the melodic instruments by the ugal (keyed instrument leading the melody), had been sloppy. “No, like this!” He begins singing the different parts—the deep, resonating syllables of the gong, the higher “ne-no-ne” of the gangsas. “And follow the kendang!”

2.1 Introducing Lasmawan

“The Johnny Appleseed of American gamelan.” It was among the first descriptions that I heard of I Madé Lasmawan from his students and a phrase that was repeated many times in talking with American gamelan players about the man and his career. A previous generation of pioneering Indonesian musicians had already begun to teach Balinese gamelan in the United States (Hardja Susilo, I Madé Bandem, and I Nyoman Wenten, to name a few) before Lasmawan’s arrival in 1990. However, none of them have consistently worked with gamelans over as large of a geographic range as has Lasmawan, nor have they begun as many new ensembles. During his more than twenty years in the United States, Lasmawan has worked consistently at one time or another with approximately fifteen different gamelan groups. Over the last few years, he has taught five gamelan groups on a weekly basis and several more on a yearly or bi-yearly basis, all while continuing to work with both Balinese and foreign musicians in his home village when he returns to Bali.
In this sense, Lasmawan (who is called “Pak Madé”15 by his students) is truly exceptional. While he would be the first to recognize and honor the teaching accomplishments of his peers across the country—his belief is that “no one group is better than another, and no one teacher; they all grow from a different time, place, and situation (desa, kala, patra)”—his longstanding musical presence throughout the Rocky Mountain region makes his career unique. Like the aforementioned American legend to whom his nickname refers, Lasmawan has planted the seeds of Indonesian musical culture in places where there previously were none, continuing to nurture groups both that he found upon his arrival and that he himself helped found.

Lasmawan’s career is predicated in large part upon working with a number of different American and Balinese educational-institutional systems. However, in that Lasmawan works between these different institutions and is not entirely beholden to one or another, he has been able to achieve near-autonomy in maintaining his own core curriculum and set of pedagogical principles. Lasmawan’s consistency and longevity in teaching have allowed him to become almost “an institution” in and of himself in the American gamelan pedagogical scene.

15 “Pak” is short for “bapak” which means “father.” “Pak” is often a term of respect added before the name of any respected male who is older than the speaker.
Because he has worked with students in so many different locations and circumstances, examining Lasmawan’s career and the communities that he has built and maintained in the United States and in Indonesia provides a particularly good case study from which to examine a variety of issues, both specifically pertaining to teaching gamelan to foreigners as well as larger ones concerning the nature of artistic education and cultural exchange between the United States and Indonesia.

2.2 Life and Work

To understand how Lasmawan’s current and previous work fits in to the larger framework of transnational gamelan culture, it is necessary first to examine his foundational experiences as a person and a teacher, comparing them to those of other Balinese performing artists and Balinese-American musician-teachers. Below, I introduce a narrative overview of Lasmawan’s life and career, providing some provisional analysis of his musical and educational background and influences. From this basis, I look in more detail towards the present, examining his teaching methods and musical communities as they have come to establish his career in the United States.

2.2.1 In Bali: Early Life and Education

I Madé Lasmawan was born in the village of Bangah, Tabanan, Bali, on January 11, 1958. He grew up in a musical family; his father, I Wayan Rinjin, was a drummer—the instrumental position that denotes the leader of the group in most Balinese gamelan styles. In addition to his work playing with the village gamelans—the oldest one, the sacred semar pegulingan/pelegongan that was only used for temple ceremonies, then later the gamelan gong kebyar—Rinjin had studied gender wayang batel (the type of gender genre used to accompany shadow puppet performances) in the neighboring village of Apuan and ran his own sanggar. Lasmawan’s uncle, I Nyoman Kembang, was also a drummer who had studied gamelan gong kebyar in Munduk, Singaraja, and also performed with the Bangah gamelans. Along with I Wayan Nedeh—a drummer who played with Lasamawan’s uncle in the Bangah gong, the village gamelan group—these were Lasmawan’s primary childhood teachers.

At the time, there was only one gamelan group in Bangah, so only a very few members of the village were actually able to learn music and play in the group. Because of his family

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16 For an introductory discussion of these genres, see Dibia and Ballinger 2004.
connections, however, Lasmawan recalls that he “was lucky” compared to other children in Bangah; he was asked to play with the village gamelan at a young age, as well as with the groups in his father’s sanggar. The sanggar often performed *janger* (a traditional folk song and dance genre, popular from the 1930s through the 1960s), *joged bumbung*, and *drama gong* (a semi-improvised theatrical genre that mixes Balinese and non-Balinese theatrical conventions, first performed in Gianyar in the mid-1960s). Lasmawan also began learning *gender wayang* from a young age, playing the *gender* with his father and other relatives.

He received formal primary school education—*sekolah dasar* (SD) and *sekolah menegah kejuruan* (SMK), the Indonesian equivalents of elementary and middle school—in the closest large town, Baturiti, because at the time Bangah was too small to support its own primary schools. He excelled in school, particular in mathematics; he was not even considering a career in music. However, while Bangah was (and still is) at the time relatively isolated, Lasamawan was already being exposed to musical influences from the outside. He says, “When I was in Bangah, our kecak teacher was from KOKAR (the traditional arts high school)—he was from far away, almost twenty miles—you know the monkey forest in Tabanan? Close to that. And my music teacher when I was in middle school, he also graduated from KOKAR. Not from my area, also from thirty miles south in Bali” (Lasmawan 2013). It was the latter of these two teachers who convinced him to enroll in KOKAR, located in Denpasar—almost thirty miles to the south.

Of his studies, Lasmawan recalls, “I was the first one in Bangah [to attend KOKAR]; there were others, but at that time—no, none from Baturiti, no other…the closest was from Perean, you know, south, almost twenty-five miles.” In addition to being the only student from his village at the conservatory, and he also recalls being one of the few students from that area of Tabanan. KOKAR and the performing arts college, Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI) historically and currently enroll students from all over Bali and even beyond; however, in reality, most of the students were (and still often are) from the southern reaches of Gianyar directly to the north,

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17 Ibid.
18 *Konservatori Karawitan* (Conservatory for Traditional Music), also known as KOKAR, was the name of the performing arts high school in Denpasar until 1976. It is currently known as Sekolah Menengah Kesenian Indonesia (SMKI).
19 Perean is actually about ten miles south of Bangah.
20 ISI also has a long history of name changes. Known as Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia (ASTI; The Indonesian Academy of Dance) until 1988, it was renamed Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia (STSI; the Indonesian high school of the arts) in 1988. In 2003, it became Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI; the Arts Institute of Indonesia). In this dissertation, I will use whichever name my informants used in that particular context. As an umbrella term (to refer to activities or policies that apply to all incarnations of the school), I will use the current term, ISI.
Badung to the northwest, and the Denpasar area itself. The geographical diversity of the Balinese teachers and students establishes an atmosphere in which Lasmawan had to familiarize himself with different regional styles, even in performing modern, standardized repertoire with which he was already familiar.

Lasmawan chose drumming as his focus of study at KOKAR, although as the leaders in most Balinese gamelan styles, the drummers were also required to learn the techniques of all of the other instruments in each ensemble in their KOKAR course of study. All students were also required to be proficient in other areas of the Balinese performing arts outside of their specialties—for example, dance students would also have to learn how to play gamelan to a certain extent. The practical music courses were generally focused by type of repertoire—gamelan gong kebyar, gamelan semar pegulingan and pelegongan, etc.—and included less common gamelan ensembles from around the island, so Lasmawan was able to learn some of the instrumental styles and practice on instrument types that were not available back in Bangah. The sheer number of gamelan genres within Bali that were taught at the time at KOKAR meant that Lasmawan had a number of “primary” teachers. He recalls:

The most I learned from [at KOKAR] was Bapak I Wayan Beratha, Bapak I Nyoman Rembang, Bapak I Wayan Sinti, Bapak Ida Bagus Arsaja, Bapak Sumartano, what is his first name…Bapak Ida Bagus Sumartano, from Singaraja… Pak Sumartano [taught] mostly western music, Pak Beratha was mostly gong kebyar, Pak Sinti was semar pegulingan, and Pak Rembang you know was mostly combined between pelegongan and semar pegulingan and gong kebyar. And Pak Arsaja, at the time actually was teaching Javanese gamelan. And also pegambuhan (gamelan gambuh music) was I Nyoman Lumping. And also I studied semar pegulingan—Bapak Gurindam, I forget his last name (Lasmawan 2013.)

In addition to working with this wide array of faculty during class time, Lasmawan, like many other conservatory graduates in Bali with whom I have spoken, claims to have learned at least as much from his study outside of the classroom as within its walls from performance opportunities in the Denpasar region as well as opportunities to study throughout Bali. He also traveled to other areas of the island to learn from great teachers in the villages:

Outside KOKAR I had more teachers…Bapak I Gedé Manik from Singaraja, I Wayan Tembres from Gianyar, and also in Karangansem, I Gusti Ketut Sedahan. Pak Gedé Manik was special for [learning] “Teruna Jaya” (a piece which he had choreographed), I Wayan Tembres was special for gong kebyar and pelegongan,
and also there was Bapak I Nyoman Sumandhi for gender wayang (Lasmawan 2013.)

In addition to his genre-specific and drumming studies, Lasmawan also was an active gender wayang player, starting groups both within Denpasar and back in Baturiti during this time period. He also performed with a number of other local groups as the opportunities arose.

Despite engaging deeply with his studies at KOKAR and being considered a star student, Lasmawan almost did not graduate. He recalls:

The second year at conservatory, I was confused. Because my brain is a mathematical brain. I was good at mathematics from elementary school until middle school. And after that, I switch to “culture brain, history brain,” you know? And I was confused at second year at the conservatory. And I quit, I quit the school and came to Bangah, [thinking] “Oh, why do I go to the conservatory? I already know how to play gamelan. I’m good at playing gamelan, why do I study there? I can study by myself at home.” I had a little bit of a big head, you know, because I performed at eight years old, I already performed for the public.

So, for one month I stayed home, and I was suddenly surprised by a lot of motorcycles that came to the village. I think it was eight motorcycles with fifteen of my classmates. It was eight—with fifteen. So, one is empty. So, my classmates say, “Madé, you have to go to Denpasar.” I was a drummer at the conservatory, you know. “We need a drummer, we need you, please come back.” And after that, I asked my mom, I get the rice, you know, three kilograms of rice on the front of the motorcycle. And I bring garlic, onion, the other vegetables, because when you go to Denpasar, usually you bring that for your food, you know.

When I got to Denpasar, my teacher said “Madé, whatever you do in this world, if you do it correctly, and with your full dedication and with the full of your time, you’re going to be able to take care of your future life.” That was, I always remember that. So, whatever your choice—business people, or to be a doctor, or a police officer, or to be an athlete—but if you do it with your full feeling and your full knowledge, then you’re going to be successful.” So after that, I’m back to school, and I forget about mathematics (Lasmawan 2012b.)

About a year later, he faced another significant setback—Lasmawan’s drumming partner had gotten his girlfriend pregnant and had to leave the conservatory. At KOKAR, young drummers were paired together from the beginning of their course of study and learned how to create and follow musical cues together. Even for seasoned kendang players, it is significantly more difficult to play with an unfamiliar partner than a partner with whom one has had extensive experience. Having to prepare repertoire for graduation with an entirely new partner forced
Lasmawan to relearn different aspects of his musical communication to be able to perform at the same level. Overcoming this setback, Lasmawan graduated from KOKAR in 1977.

2.2.2 In Java: Higher Education and Diversification of Influences

After graduating from KOKAR, Lasmawan returned to Baturiti and applied to Udayana University in Denpasar, once again intent on pursuing a career outside of music. However, he then received a letter from Akademi Seni Karawitan Indonesia (ASKI) in Surakarta, Java. The faculty wanted to offer him a scholarship to study Central Javanese gamelan and also to teach Balinese gamelan there at the conservatory. It was a relatively rare opportunity; Lasmawan notes:

At the time, it was mostly the Javanese students that studied Balinese gamelan; it was less than ten Balinese students, now it is more; I was among the first five Balinese to study in Java. I was the second generation—there were maybe three students before me, I was number four (Lasmawan 2013.)

Lasmawan accepted the offer and went to Java that same year.

In contrast to KOKAR in Bali, where teachers specialized in teaching distinct gamelan ensemble types, the instructors in Java focused on teaching specific instruments, so one could learn all of the instruments and play in any number of locations within the ensemble during a particular rehearsal or performance setting. While there are many musical and cultural similarities between Balinese and Javanese gamelans—the general types of instruments, cyclic forms, related pelog/slendro tuning systems, multipart textures, stratified musical organization, and association with dance, puppetry, and the Hindu epics are related between the two—there are also some vast differences. While much of the physical technique is similar to Balinese gamelan—the kendang, saron (keyed metallophone), bonang (kettle gong), and large gongs require many of the same motions playing motions—the vastly different shapes of the instrument bodies, the thicknesses of the keys, the shapes and manners of handling the mallets all make it a different physical experience. More fundamentally, the playing speed, style, and how the music fits together differ greatly between Balinese and Javanese gamelan. Balinese musical styles tend to focus around a single core melody (pokok) played in the mid-range instruments which is grounded in slower, lower-pitched gong cycles and elaborated upon by higher-pitched

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21 (Akademi Seni Karawitan Indonesia; later Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia [STSI] and Institut Seni Indonesia [ISI]) in Surakarta, Java
interlocking instrumental parts (kotekan). The core melody tends to change and develop through different sections of the same piece; however, the relationships between the parts remain the same.

Additionally, although there are slower pieces and slower sections, many Balinese pieces are played at consistently lightning-fast speeds, with little substantive improvisation in most parts. In contrast, while Javanese gamelan pieces are also based on the relationship between a core melody in the mid-range instruments (balungan; often played in an abstracted form), punctuated by lower-pitched gongs and elaborated upon by other instruments, the types of instruments that elaborate on the melody, their melodic and rhythmic methods of doing so, and the conceptual map of the relationships between the instruments is quite different. Although Lasmawan pointed out to me several times that he considers the Javanese court gamelan styles to be the root of the Balinese and that their underlying theoretical principles overlap, the methods of playing, instrumentation, and musical ornamentation are substantially different.

Lasmawan had already had some experience playing Javanese gamelan—there was a Javanese gamelan at KOKAR and he had studied there under Ida Bagus Ajsaja—but he still had much to learn at ASKI. He spent much of his time working with different teachers on mastering the technique of the specific instruments, both within and outside the conservatory:

- Bapak Martopangrawit
- Bapak Mloyo Widodo
- Bapak Panji Supapirilih
- Bapak Sri Hastanto (he was Indian)
- Bapak Rustopo
- Bapak Subona
- Bapak Rahayuh Supangga
- Bapak Slamat Suparno

So, I was not very normal [in terms of course of study]. I tried to get more study outside of the school, you know, so like Pak Marto, Pak Mloyo, they were mostly outside of the school (Lasmawan 2013.)

With each of these teachers he would work on instrumental technique, ensemble technique, and theory. The music and its traditions subsequently became deeply ingrained within Lasmawan. Although he rarely gets to play Javanese gamelan now—all but one of his American groups performs Balinese styles, and the Javanese group is a recent addition—he still carries a lot of fondness for his years spent in Java, and for the style of music. He had wanted to study Javanese gamelan, he told me, because it contained “the roots of Balinese gamelan,” particularly its theory. Although now rarely called upon to teach Javanese gamelan or explain its theoretical relationships to its Balinese cousins, Lasmawan’s interest in theory is still quite apparent in his teaching of Balinese genres, as he will sometimes stop in the middle of a lesson to explain the
theoretical underpinnings of a piece, or strike up a conversation about the theoretical roots of a specific genre over his morning coffee with his students in Bali.

When not learning Javanese gamelan, Lasmawan spent his time teaching the Balinese gamelan courses at the conservatory:

When I was in Java, I started the class in Javanese gamelan, but they also hired me to teach Balinese gamelan—mostly gong kebyar and pelegongan and after that angklung because at that time in Java, we don’t have gambuh, we don’t have gambang, it was mostly gong kebyar, joged bumbung, pelegongan, and angklung (Lasmawan 2013.)

Although Lasmawan had taught in less formal settings before, this was his first time to teach gamelan within the context of an institution. Each course had a syllabus with required pieces that the students had to learn to play during each semester. He recalls that although the Javanese students had never before attempted to play Balinese gamelan, he was able to teach in a similar manner to how he taught in Bali; the students learned quickly by rote, already having the basic coordination in their hands and the basic sounds in their ears. In talking about that time, he noted, laughing, that “For most of the Javanese, the technique carried over to Balinese [gamelan]…they just had to learn how to play fast” (Lasmawan 2012b.)

During this time period, Lasmawan additionally performed with a number of other musical groups in the city, continuing to pursue not only his studies but also performance opportunities outside of the conservatory:

I also joined many groups outside of ISI. So, for example, Yayasan Kesenian Surakarta, that’s like a sanggar, you know like a music-dance studio outside of ISI. And sometimes I would join with RRI Surakarta—you know RRI? The radio broadcasting? And also I joined to Seniman Muda Surakarta, that was the company where the seniman muda, the young artists, of Solo. And also I joined with the universitas outside of ISI, so like the Universitas Sebelas Maret, other universitas in Surakarta. So I joined more outside of the school to get more practice and performance (Lasmawan 2013.)

He also was involved with the early music kontemporer scene in Surakarta, working with other students and young composers to create works that modified the playing techniques of Javanese and Balinese gamelans, as well as mixing elements of both styles together. At the time, he notes:

Experimental [music] actually had just started at ISI, so I start with that…two of us graduated, the first to graduate with new experimental compositions…I combined gamelan with the wood bell, you know the wood bell in Bali, we call
okokan [a folk instrument from Tabanan shaped like a cowbell]…and combined with some elemen-elemen how to play gamelan with different technique, like bowing jegogan, you know, and also filling the reyong with water [a technique he also used with new pieces composed in 2013]…I already started that, a long time ago (Lasmawan 2013.)

He graduated from ISI-Surakarta with a sarjana satu (S1) degree (equivalent of an American bachelor’s degree) in 1981 and a sarjana dua (S2; equivalent of an American master’s degree) in 1983. After graduation, he continued to lecture at both ASKI and then ISI in Surakarta throughout the late 1980s, performing with his local groups and touring all over the country through government (Jakarta)-sponsored programs. He was also one of two individuals from ASKI/STSI to tour to Singapore, Malaysia, and Japan. In Japan especially he was fascinated to find a thriving gamelan scene that included ensembles performing different types of gamelans from all over Indonesia. At that time, little did he know that he would soon be on another continent, teaching gamelan to foreigners and building another thriving gamelan scene.

2.2.3 Lasmawan’s Teachers: Shaping a Future Educator

Lasmawan’s musical education was at once typical and exceptional for a Balinese-born gamelan musician. His initial years in the village echo the early life-stories of many Balinese musicians, both those who made music a hobby and those who made it a profession, those who teach and perform in Bali alone and those who also have significant international careers (Bakan 1999, McGraw 2013). It is common to teach the young son of a Balinese musical family how to play gamelan music. While Lasmawan says it is not necessary in that situation for that child to continue to pursue music seriously or make music his career, he does believe it is part of the elder family musician’s dharma (role in maintaining the stability and harmony of the universe) to pass on this knowledge. In Lasmawan’s case, he was the son who most closely embraced the family’s gamelan-playing traditions, becoming a professional musician and teacher despite being tempted to choose other career paths. This career path in itself is also unusual; when asked about the subsequent careers of his fellow classmates from KOKAR, Lasmawan reports that:

Not many become music teacher like me. I would say, from sixty that graduate with me—maybe ten percent get a faculty position in music, the rest of them get some other job. Like, I was surprised, some of them are a banker, a police officer, a congressman…[he laughs]…yeah, I know, and also other businesses, you know. Because at the time, you know, there was a lot of open work that you were able to do in Bali…Speaking about the professor/faculty, it’s not many, but of course when you are faculty, you can be teaching at ISI-Denpasar, or ISI-Solo, or
Udayana University, but that’s only a small amount of the situations [that are available] (Lasmawan 2012b.)

Lasmawan’s musical education demonstrates a continuing transition of educational norms in Bali during the mid-twentieth century from being based in the villages towards centering more on conservatory culture. In his secondary education at KOKAR, he studied with many of the most eminent teachers of the age—among them I Wayan Sinti, I Nyoman Rembang, and I Wayan Beratha, who was known as “the father of Balinese karawitan (traditional music)” (Suriyani 2012) as it developed in the twentieth century who co-founded KOKAR. The majority of these teachers, born in the 1920s-1940s, received little formal musical education—Beratha and Rembang, for example, only completed sekloah dasar (SD; elementary school).

Through these teachers, all both preservers of and innovators in Balinese musical and pedagogical style, Lasmawan received training in a musical lineage outside that of his family and village, with influences stretching back to some of the great artists of the early twentieth century: I Wayan Lotring, I Wayan Regog, I Nyoman Kaler, and others. As Lasmawan says, “Air mengelir,” invoking the common phrase used to describe the passing of knowledge from one generation to the next. Although KOKAR had been founded more than ten years before Lasmawan’s enrollment and it was already common for aspiring young musicians to study there under this diverse set of well-known teachers, the fact that he was still the only student from his home region indicates that his presence was a bit of an anomaly, his insertion into this musical lineage, a new branch. The additional study that Lasmawan pursued outside KOKAR at this time, while not unusual, was purposeful and extensive; although it is more common for students to study a musical style primarily under one teacher only, Lasmawan consistently sought out other perspectives on his playing.

Lasmawan’s transition to studying in Java was, as suggested above, a bit more unusual. While he indicated that there had been Balinese students there before, Lasmawan’s educational background—an almost equal mix of Balinese and Javanese arts—is still an anomaly. In Java like in Bali, Lasmawan studied with some of the best known teachers, musicians, theorists of Javanese music, and composers of the age, both inside and outside the conservatory. Many of them—for example, Martopangrawit—could trace back their family musical lineages as royal musicians back to when the Javanese courts still held political sway in the 19th century, and still continued to play with the court gamelans in Surakarta. While he was already teaching his own
Fig. 2.2 Lasmawan's musical heritage

In Bangah, Bali (1960s)
- I Nyoman Kembang
  Uncle; drumming
- I Wayan Nedehe
  Uncle's drumming partner, drumming
- I Wayan Rinjin
  Father; drumming, general Balinese arts

At KOKAR, Denpasar, Bali (1970s)
- Ida Bagus Arsaja
  Javanese Gamelan
- I Wayan Beratha
  Gong kebyar
- I Nyoman Rembang
  Pelegongan, gong kebyar
- I Wayan Sinti
  Semar pegulingan
- Ida Bagus Sumentano
  Western music

Outside KOKAR, Bali (1970s)
- Bapak Gurindam
  Semar pegulingan
- I Nyoman Lumping
  Gambuh
- I Gedé Manik
  "Teruna Jaya"
- I Nyoman Sumandhi
  Gender wayang
- I Wayan Timbres
  Gong kebyar

While at STSI, Surakarta, Java (Late 1970s-1980s)
- Sri Hastanto
- Martopangrawit
  Gender, theory
- Bapak Rustopo
- Bapak Rahayuh Supangga
- Bapak Subona
  Kendhang
- Panji Supapirili
- T. Slamet Suparno
  Rebab, kendang
- Mloyo Widodo
  Bonang

California, USA (Early 1990s)
- "Pak Cokro" (K.P.H. Notoprojo)
  Javanese gamelan

I Madé Lasmawan
students, Lasmawan continued to learn. Even after moving to the United States, he continued his studies with “Pak Cokro,” one of Yogyakarta’s most famous Javanese gamelan musicians and a longtime instructor of Javanese gamelan in the United States at UCLA, California Institute of the Arts, and other institutions.

During the early, Indonesian part of his musical career, Lasmawan received some training in almost every major style of gamelan music—a result of both the educational diversity of the conservatories and his own efforts to seek out new musical experiences—and had practice teaching them. While he was well regarded as a composer and a musician among his contemporaries, Lasmawan had not become well-known for his work in any particular genre; he was more of a generalist, competent in a number of musical settings. Although versatility is a useful skill for a gamelan musician—especially in Bali, with the lingering diversity and popularity of different styles and repertoires—it was a skill that would prove essential in the next phase of Lasmawan’s life, in North America.

2.2.4 Towards a Transnational Pedagogical Career

The late 1980s had been a productive time for Lasmawan, both personally and professionally. He was married in Java to his first wife, Siti Maryuni, and in 1989 she gave birth to the first of Lasmawan’s three sons, Putu Hiranmayena. Lasmawan was also busy teaching and touring. During a tour in the following year, he happened to meet an American ethnomusicologist, Robert (Bob) Brown, a chance meeting that would set Lasmawan on an entirely new path.

Brown had been Mantle Hood’s first teaching assistant at UCLA in the mid-1950s and was a founding figure in world music education in the United States (even purportedly coining the term “world music;” see Williams 2005). He had founded the ethnomusicology programs at Wesleyan (1961) and at San Diego State University (1979), as well as the Center for World Music (1963), a San Diego-based nonprofit organization that organizes world music education for public schools and musical study abroad for adults. Brown had long been involved with the Indonesian performing arts specifically. He had begun to study gamelan during his time at UCLA and had led study abroad programs to Bali at his house, Flower Mountain in Payangan.

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22 Born Tjokrowasito, he attained different names corresponding to different earned titles: Wasitodipuro, Wasitodiningrat, and K.P.H. Notoprojo. In America, he was best known by the nickname “Pak Cokro.”

23 In the mid-1990s, he would get divorced and then marry Ni Ketut Marni, his current wife, partner in teaching the Balinese arts, and mother of his two younger sons, Adé and Aji.
Bali during his time working at the California Institute of the Arts (also known as CalArts; 1971-1979). (The Flower Mountain program continues to this day).

At the time that he met Lasmawan, Brown had taught at San Diego State University (SDSU) for over ten years, and was looking for an instructor to work with both the university’s Balinese and Javanese ensembles. He invited Lasmawan to become the guest teacher for the ensembles. After much consideration, Lasmawan decided to take the job, and he asked for the time off from teaching at the conservatory in Surakarta. It was one of several international job offers that he had received in the last few years. However, the response he had received from his employers at ISI-Surakarta had not been positive. He recalls,

In 1986, I almost got a job in the UK—but the head of my school in Java, they wouldn’t let me take it. And also, this American opportunity, they don’t let me go because you know, they like me in Java. San Diego State already sent the contract three times, contract for myself, but they sent it to the office [at ISI], you know, and they don’t let me—ahhh! You know—[the San Diego State people said] “I send the contract three times, why do you not come?” And so I’m [saying] “I did not get any contract! Send it to my house!” And after that, they send it to my house, and I just go to America, and I get a visa, and go by myself. Same with Tokyo, Tokyo University, and London—which one is it in London? Southampton. Yeah, I almost got the job there. And finally I landed in America (Lasmawan 2012a.)

He moved his family over and began teaching in January 1990. Despite initial difficulties with visas and finances, he has resided principally in the United States ever since.

During this time in San Diego, Lasmawan began to put down roots that spread across the country. He spent several years teaching the college groups at UCSD, performing often locally and even bringing them on a three-week tour to Mexico. He was also invited to perform and teach across the western United States, including one gig in Colorado that would lead to his starting multiple ongoing positions there in 1993. Over the course of the next twenty years, he established or worked with Balinese gamelan ensembles in eight different states (California, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, New York, Ohio, Idaho, and Arizona.) Lasmawan estimates that he has helped found between ten and fifteen full gamelans and a number of smaller gender wayang groups. Most of the gamelans he has brought to universities have been gamelan angklung sets; they are relatively inexpensive, small, and easy to learn how to play in comparison to gong kebyar or semaradana ensembles.
Lasmawan notes that “Before I move to the USA, there is no gamelan in the middle of America, only in California and East Coast—you know like, New York, Boston, Wesleyan, Washington DC…[I Nyoman] Wenten was performing everywhere, you know” (Lasmawan 2012a). At some of the places where Lasmawan worked, there were already gamelan sets present, but no current instructors. At others, he was the one to start the gamelan and keep it running, a process which generally occurred as follows:

I started at the beginning, you know, I start the program. I bring gamelan there. And then I go there at the beginning, like for one month, and continue teaching, but every end of the semester, I come for one week, and we make a performance, and any piece [the director] wants to, I bring recording and make a notation and send a video. And after that, I come for the concert for one week. Did I tell you, the end of May, the end of this semester? I have 24 concerts! (Lasmawan 2012a)

Because of an increase in both Balinese gamelan instructors in the United States and Americans who are able to at least provisionally lead a gamelan ensemble, Lasmawan no longer works with all of the groups that he has founded or assisted over the years. Currently, he instructs four academic Balinese gamelan ensembles in Colorado—Gamelan Tunjung Sari (four-tone angklung) and Gamelan Santi Suara (gender wayang) at Colorado College, Gamelan Genta Kencana (five-tone gamelan angklung) at the University of Colorado at Boulder, and Gamelan Manik Kusuma (four-tone gamelan angklung) at Metropolitan State University. (He has also previously worked with Gamelan Eka Mudra at Naropa University, but their gamelan gong kebyar is currently dormant). He also works with the community-based Gamelan Tunas Mekar (four-tone angklung and semaradana) and its offshoot gender wayang group, Cakur Eka Santi. Additionally, he has recently founded a small Central Javanese ensemble whose instruments are housed at Colorado College.

Outside of Colorado, he currently teaches Gamelan Candra Wyoga (gamelan semar pegulingan) at the University of Wyoming, a group that encompasses both college and community members, on a weekly basis. More infrequently, on closer to a yearly basis, he works with several other groups in the Rocky Mountain area, namely in Missoula, Montana: Gamelan Jaya Budaya at the University of Wyoming and in Missoula, a community group, Gamelan

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24 The Balinese performing arts instructor who, with his wife, has consistently taught in the US for the longest amount of time, starting in the 1970s. Since that time he has worked with a number of gamelans throughout the country, although primarily in California around the Los Angeles area (UCLA and CalArts).
Manik Harum (gamelan angklung and beleganjur), and a children’s group, Kocong!, at Lewis and Clark Elementary School.

Although they achieve some unity in being taught by the same teachers (Lasmawan for music and Lasmawan’s second and current wife, Ni Ketut Marni, for dance), there are also substantial differences in how the gamelans are organized and taught, based on type of ensemble (angklung, semaradana, semar pegulingan), personnel (academic, community, or child members), and schedule (frequency with which Lasmawan works with each group). The following section describes the establishment of these ensembles and situates them contextually in terms of Lasmawan’s history working in Colorado, the distinct personalities of the groups, and their relationships to each other.

**2.3 In America: A Network of Gamelans**

Lasmawan’s work has taken him from Bali to Java to America, throughout the Rockies from Colorado to Wyoming to Montana to Utah to Idaho and beyond. At the time of my writing of this dissertation, Lasmawan was working intensively with at least eight gamelans throughout the Rocky Mountains, from those that he taught twice a week to those that he worked with only one time per year. But after driving for hundreds of miles each week to instruct each group, Lasmawan and his wife return every week to their home in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

At first glance, Colorado might seem an unlikely place to center a blossoming network of gamelans. It is far from the Indonesian consulates and their associated “cultural attachés” in New York, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles; far from the academic institutions that first adopted Balinese gamelan sets (UCLA, Wesleyan, and others); and far from the community gamelan groups that developed in California beginning in the 1970s (Gamelan Sekar Jaya, founded in 1978, being the most famous). The geography of the land, too, makes the area somewhat isolated. Urban areas are far apart. Wide open spaces are interrupted by towering mountain ranges, and the weather can be inclement for driving with the entire area often receiving snow well into April or May.

Yet, this network of gamelans has sustained and been sustained by Lasmawan and his wife for over twenty years, with Colorado as the center. Looking back, Lasmawan sees the move up into the mountainous state as not only a practical career move at the time, but a symbolic move as well. I first heard why on a glorious June afternoon while I was sitting on the porch of one of his balé in his compound in Bangah. The name “Bangah,” he noted, was derived from the
Teratai Bang, a spiritually significant nearby river whose name is that of a red water lily flower. He pointed out that in turn, “Colorado”—a Spanish name meaning “colored red,” referring to rocks rushed down by the mountain streams—had basically the same meaning, and thus they matched. It was not only that the two names had similar meanings, either. Red is an important color in the Balinese Hindu religion, along with black and white, and combinations of black, white, and red can be found throughout temple decorations in Bali. The colors represent the members of the Trimurti—Brahma, Visnu, and Shiva, the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe. Red represents Brahma the Creator, the lord of speech and sound; thus the central presence of red serves symbolically as representing and fostering new creations.

Lasmawan’s career in Colorado has certainly been one of new creations, and his gamelan groups, both old and new, have all grown and blossomed under his tutelage. However, Lasmawan did not bring the first gamelan with him; rather, it was Colorado’s first gamelan that brought him to the state, The Denver Gamelan, the angklung set that would one day become the basis of Colorado’s most serious community gamelan group, Gamelan Tunas Mekar, and which would play a large part in the establishment of the university groups that followed.

2.3.1 Denver: Gamelan Tunas Mekar

The auditorium was perfectly silent. On the stage sat over twenty musicians clad in green jackets, green lace kebayas, and matching kain cloth skirts, creating a riot of color with the red and gold-painted bodies of the gamelan semaradana sitting before them and the orange and gray-painted “temple gates” that rose behind them at the back of the stage. In the middle sat Lasmawan, the sole drummer for the performance. After making sure all eyes were upon him, he gave a sharp drum cue, and then the musicians began the piece with its sparse, quick opening cadences (gineman), with eight gangsa players completed the blindingly fast, angular, stop-start phrases before falling in to a regular gong cycle. From the gate emerged the first dancer, her slender body, clad in shimmering pink and gold, sinuously moving between shapes just as angular as the music by which they were accompanied. This was the opening of “Teruna Jaya,” one of the more difficult standardized modern dance pieces of the modern kebyar repertoire—one made even more difficult by the “extra” keys found on the semaradana set. The crowd applauded; this was probably the most picky, precise moment of the most difficult piece of the night, and the group had nailed it.
This group was Gamelan Tunas Mekar, the oldest and most active community Balinese gamelan group in the Rockies. They rehearse twice a week, all year, for several hours each and perform at least once monthly. They play on both angklung and semaradana, performing a mixture of both traditional and newly-composed repertoire on both sets. As an ensemble, the group has played for twenty-five years as of the fall of 2013. However, the history of their original instruments—the set of four-tone angklung—goes back another twelve years.

The instruments first arrived in 1976—ordered by ethnomusicologist and composer Gertrude Rivers Robinson for Colorado Women’s College in Denver. She was one of the first American women to prominently study gamelan (at UCLA), and later one of the first few to teach it, at the college. I Madé Bandem, who was finishing up his doctoral work at UCLA at the time, brought over the set from Bali. This angklung set was already something special. Some Balinese gamelans in America contain older sets of keys with newly carved wooden bodies—the older keys are preferable because they are considered to have a better tone quality. However, the Tunas Mekar angklung set was formerly a complete village gamelan, taken intact and brought to the States. It was possibly originally a gender wayang set that had been recast twenty years prior, and it still reflected village angklung aesthetics. There was only one gong (no larger gongs used for playing kebyar-style repertoire) and the reyong did not have a long carved body on
which to sit; they were mounted on pairs in what used to be marching harnesses. While old
gamelan keys reset into new bodies are still relatively easy to find and import to the United
States, this angklung was supposedly the last village gamelan to be sold and exported intact after
changes to Indonesian cultural export policy in the late 1970s were enacted to prohibit what was
considered to be the exodus of important pieces of Balinese cultural, religious, and artistic
heritage (Fitts 2013).

The original angklung group, instructed by Robinson, was active for a few years until the
College was subsumed by the University of Denver in 1982. Jill Fredericksen, a jazz drummer
and one of the oldest members of Gamelan Tunas Mekar, remembers first seeing the angklung as
a student studying jazz drumming at the university. She did not yet know what it was. No one
really did. It had just been shoved into a closet.

In 1988, friends of an original member of the gamelan at the women’s college, Frankie
Anderson, had just returned from touring with a rock band in Asia. They had stopped over in
Bali and had been fascinated by the performances that they saw. Frankie told them that she had
played gamelan, and even knew where one was. In that year, this small group of professional
musicians managed to receive the gamelan on permanent loan from the Lamont School of Music
at Denver University and began a small gamelan group of their own. The Denver Gamelan was
born.

Michael Fitts, one of the more senior members of the gamelan and its president since
2000, recalls how the group practiced in the beginning. There were about eight of them present
at those initial rehearsals, and despite most of the early members being professional musicians,
no one had any substantive experience playing gamelan. “It was mostly stuff that someone
pulled off of tapes,” he recalls (Fitts 2013). They were also able to hire Wayne Vitale, an
eminent player from Gamelan Sekar Jaya, to come out and run workshops for a few weeks at a
time, once or twice a year. Eventually, the group learned to play some traditional repertoire. Fitts
notes that it was “Stuff we don’t really play anymore. ‘Panyembraha’ was like, the toughest
piece, and the group at the time wasn’t playing all of it; we called it ‘the beast,’ and now it’s a
piece that puts us to sleep…I mean, it’s still pretty, but it’s not like trying to play ‘Teruna Jaya’
on semaradana ” (Fitts 2013). At the time, he says, they were just “trying to get enough people to
make it sound better and better.”

More of Fitts's experiences are detailed in section 4.2 below.
Membership was low, and the gamelan—housed in members’ private residences in the Denver area—kept having to switch homes. It stayed in the Highlands area, then in an attic apartment in Capitol Hill, then an apartment in Governor’s Park until neighbors filed too many noise complaints with the police. Eventually, the instruments ended up in a recording studio area in Fitts’s basement, where they remain to this day. Still, the group rehearsed weekly and was starting to perform in the Denver area. Members wrote their own pieces, even constructing their own gamelan to expand the range of available tones. Sometimes the group experimentation, not yet guided by a Balinese hand, would venture into the realm of accidental insensitivity. Fitts remembered in particular a new dance piece written by gamelan group member David Taylor. The dance choreography had people’s feet going over other people’s heads—a major cultural taboo in Bali. The work happened to be seen by eminent Balinese dancer I Wayan Dibia and his American co-collaborator, rhythm dancer Keith Terry; they “read Taylor the riot act” (Fitts 2013).

In 1990, I Ketut Madri, the group’s first Balinese gamelan instructor, who stayed just a short time, renamed the gamelan. The naming of a gamelan is very important symbolically; in the case of Tunas Mekar, it was also quite prescient. “Tunas” means a bit of stored life force; “Mekar” means “to put forth.” According to the annotated translation on the Gamelan Tunas Mekar website, the two words compounded carry a more detailed meaning: “a wayward seed, blown far from the parent plant and landing on unfamiliar soil that has nonetheless produced an amazing flower” (“About Gamelan Tunas Mekar,” 2013).

That flower began to blossom with Lasmawan’s arrival in 1991. His first work with the group was under surprisingly political circumstances. Dewi Sukarno—one of the wives of the late, deposed first president of Indonesia, Sukarno—was being released from prison in Aspen, Colorado. In honor of the occasion, the Indonesian government was flying out dancer and Indonesian cultural attaché I Wayan Supartha to perform. Hearing that there was a gamelan nearby, the event organizers inquired: would the gamelan play? Supartha knew Lasmawan and so he was flown out to lead the group. After rehearsing together for only a day, they played the performance.

After that first experience, the members of Gamelan Tunas Mekar brought Lasmawan out again, this time for a few weeks. They had wanted to put on a large concert at the Lamont School of Music, and had managed to borrow the gamelan gong kebyar instruments resident at Naropa
College in Boulder, Colorado. There were musical challenges—the group had never rehearsed with a drummer—but also challenges in cross-cultural understanding. Several years prior, a small number of Tunas Mekar members had traveled to Bali to study and had brought back performance uniforms—black satin and silk tops and kebayas, at the time, the in-fashion colors to wear to funeral cremation ceremonies. In addition to being decked out in these relatively new uniforms, Dane Terry—an original member who still plays with the group today—had decided to make a background for the stage. He had seen a temple gate that he had really liked in a book and so they constructed it, eighteen feet tall, and placed it onstage. However—and the veteran group members laugh when telling this part of the story—Dane had not realized that the gate he had copied was that to a pura dalem, the temple of death. “So,” Michael concluded in his telling of the story, “we had put up an eighteen-foot death temple and dressed in black, for a secular performance. I think he (Lasmawan) thought we were nuts!” (Fitts 2013)

But, as he and I continued to talk, Fitts described another side of that first real performance. “And so we had learned a bunch of kebyar and angklung pieces and put this performance on—with the black shirts and the death temple. And I think after that [Lasmawan] was like, ‘Yeah, I’m definitely going to come here.’ He was literally exhausted and tearing (up) when he was onstage when we were all done. He just had some strong feeling…” (Fitts 2013). I understood what he meant. I had seen a shadow of that feeling when Pak Madé had first talked about the similarity of the names “Bangah” and “Colorado;” the feeling that it had all seemed meant to be. In 1992, he packed his wife and his three-year-old son into the car and made the move to Colorado.

Tunas Mekar, and Lasmawan’s career in Colorado, grew slowly at first. In addition to teaching the group, Lasmawan was also working with the gamelan gamelan gong kebyar at Naropa University and the newly acquired angklung at Colorado College. Although his combined salaries were already more than he had been paid at San Diego State, it was still difficult to make ends meet; for the first few years, he and his family lived in Michael and Jill’s house, and Lasmawan also took odd jobs to supplement his income. It was only when Vicki Levine at Colorado College gave him what Fitts refers to as “the real job” (described below) that he was able to achieve some measure of stability.

According to early members of Tunas Mekar, the group changed dramatically with Madé’s arrival. Although the process of learning—by rote, mostly, with only core melody parts
notated—was similar to how it had been before, the knowledge, skill, and expertise that Lasmawan brought to the group transformed the learning process. Additionally, Lasmawan’s wife was a dancer, and the gamelan began to perform kebyar dance pieces transposed for angklung. The addition of the dancer, according to Fitts, brought in an entirely new dimension to the performance process. Having a resident Balinese musician and a resident Balinese dancer brought stability to Tunas Mekar, as they no longer had to rely on bringing in different guest teachers to learn new materials. Their repertoire expanded and their performance calendar began to fill up.

In 1996, the group went on their first and only tour of Bali. Most of the ensemble’s performances were for village events, but the capstone was their performance at the Bali Arts Festival. They performed for almost two hours, playing difficult, mostly modern classic kebyar dance pieces such as “Teruna Jaya” and “Oleg Tamblingan”—entirely on the angklung. The performance was written up in Gatra, a Jakarta-based news magazine, among other places: “Dari Denver Menggugah Bali” (“Denver Awakens Bali”). According to the article, the performance was surprising, but not because of Tunas Mekar’s presence; Gamelan Sekar Jaya had given their second performance at that venue just a year before. Instead, it was because “‘Tunas Mekar’ bravely performed gamelan angklung” (Suartaya 1996). The article notes that “This type of orchestra has received little attention from the Balinese artists themselves. In Bali, ‘angklung’ refers to a four-tone gamelan that is usually played for funerals. As opposed to kebyar, which is readily found throughout the island, angklung does not occur in every village.” It then quotes Lasmawan: “We want to awaken the Balinese, especially composers, to examine angklung more closely” (in Suartaya 1996). Even though it is rare for the Bali Arts Festival to feature performances on the more limited-range musical ensembles, from an American perspective, the “choice” to perform on angklung was one of necessity; it was the one that Tunas Mekar members were used to playing. Although it was “surprising” to some listeners (including the Balinese dancers who were attempting to perform to the music) to hear gong kebyar pieces played on angklung, this switch is not without precedent: in the recordings that American ethnomusicologist Ruby Ornstein made of gamelan angklung ensembles in the 1960s, a good number of them either contained kebyar-esque influences or were direct adaptations of gamelan gong kebyar pieces for gamelan angklung (Ornstein 2010).
The article, written for an Indonesian audience, also points out some interesting differences between American and Balinese gamelan groups. First, “Tunas Mekar’s members are not professional musicians, but work in a variety of fields” (Suartaya 1996). While this is also true for many gamelan groups in Bali—it is rare to find a sanggar group that is composed entirely of musicians who do not have other employment—many of the groups that perform at the Bali Arts Festival are comprised of individuals who do earn a substantial amount of income from their playing.

Secondly, as the article states, “They rehearse twice a week, traveling distances from separate locations to study gamelan” (Suartaya 1996). While there is some individual travel involved in composing “all-star” performing groups in Bali or educational groups, such as those at ISI, the vast majority of gamelans in Bali are still based around location within a banjar. As a community group, Gamelan Tunas Mekar has a fairly wide geographic range, with some individuals driving over seventy-five miles each way to attend rehearsals—a relatively small distance in America, but one that would be equivalent to driving almost a third of the way around Bali.

Finally, the article notes, “Another interesting aspect: the players don’t stick to one instrument, but move around instead” (Suartaya 1996). In traditional Balinese groups, most individuals—while having experience on multiple instruments—generally have one primary instrument that they play, and would certainly stay on only one or two instruments for an entire concert. In Lasmawan’s gamelans, both academic and community, students move for pedagogical reasons—to give them different experiences and teach them both different playing techniques and how different instruments fit into the ensemble.

In many respects, these differences persist in how the group operates today, although Tunas Mekar has continued to develop and change over the last twenty years with Lasmawan as their director. The group acquired their semaradana set almost fifteen years ago, shortly after the Bali Arts Festival performance. A smaller, subsidiary group of members also perform on gender wayang. Always at near capacity in terms of performing members, Tunas Mekar currently practices twice per week and performs at least once per month. The members have grown musically as well; now, they can perform “Teruna Jaya” on semaradana. They keep approximately five to ten compositions “ready to perform” at any given time, and a much deeper knowledge of musical repertoires played at concerts past lurks just below the surface of the
group’s communal memory, ready to be pulled up and brushed off within a few weeks’ of rehearsals.

Tunas Mekar has not yet returned to Bali, although there are plans to take the ensemble—all of the members, including the dancers—for the summer of 2014. When I asked if they would play in the Bali Arts Festival again, some of the more senior group members responded that they did not feel that it was necessary in order for the visit to constitute a fulfilling experience. Lasmawan himself gave the most detailed answer:

But like I say, they would not play for Bali Arts Festival, no matter what. We just try to—what do you call it—ngayah, it’s just like, play for the temple ceremony or play at a ceremony just somewhere in the village (Lasmawan 2012b.)

In other discussions about the subject, he specifically cited the idea of connection with the audience as an issue with the Bali Arts Festival; he feels that the American musicians make a better connection to Balinese culture when they play for the temples in the villages.

There are no Balinese temples in North America, and most Balinese Americans return to Bali to take care of important life-cycle rituals (births, ritual teeth filings, weddings, cremations), thus leaving few of the traditional venues for gamelan music performance. However, many of the events at which Gamelan Tunas Mekar performs are large and open to the community. In addition to holding their own concert hall performances, the group commonly performs in local public schools, exposing cafeteria-auditoriums full of children to the new musical styles. They play for private parties, for opening ceremonies to conferences, and at music and cultural festivals. Some of these performances are recurring; for the last few years, the ensemble has been featured prominently at the Colorado Dragon Boat Festival, a two-day event held every July that centers on a modern competition of the ancient Chinese boat race form. The pan-Asian focus of the festival situates Gamelan Tunas Mekar, often the only Indonesian cultural group to perform, as not only an example of the Balinese performing arts, but a symbol of Indonesia and a representative part of an intercultural Asian-Colorado identity assumed for the festival by attendees who are both ethnically Asian or not.

The festivals and the elementary school performances, often free to the public and attended by a large segment of the local community, are probably the closest that any American group can come in terms of public exposure and service to the performances at traditional Balinese performance venues. However, instead of reifying traditional religious and cultural
values like the performances do in Bali, these community performances instead provide culturally exotic entertainment for enthusiasts and novices alike, and thus might be better identified with performances at the Bali Arts Festival or the tourist shows in Bali.

Another substantial difference between Tunas Mekar’s performances and those for temple ceremonies is that Tunas Mekar tries to schedule predominantly paid performances. Unlike other community gamelans (such as Gamelan Sekar Jaya) that charge biannual participation fees, Gamelan Tunas Mekar is free for members to join; they only have to pay for the costumes in which they perform. The remainder of the money necessary for the group—for paying Lasmawan, renting trucks, buying new instruments—comes from the performances. Kendall Burks, a recent graduate of University of Colorado-Boulder and several year member of Tunas Mekar notes that it’s “great for students” who do not have to worry about economic cost to participate. However, as president Michael Fitts notes, “It does require commitment. When a new person wants to play, we explain the situation and ask, “Are you going to be around for the next six months?” (Fitts 2013)

It speaks to Tunas Mekar’s now-ingrained position within the local community that they are able to cover their operating costs through performances only. However, this is in part because the group does not have to entirely sustain Lasmawan’s family economically; that role falls to Colorado College and the stable professional position that has allowed him to become the heart of the Rocky Mountain Balinese gamelan scene.

2.3.2 Colorado Springs: Colorado College

The bumper sticker read “Keep Colorado Springs Lame.” It was a simple white-on-black number produced by The Leechpit, a venerable shop of strange wares located on the edge of the Colorado College campus. After receiving a text about the thrift store from Ian, who had driven me down to Colorado Springs from Boulder to witness the 20th anniversary celebration festival for the Colorado College gamelan program, I walked into the place early on a Friday afternoon in May 2013. Weaving through racks of ladies’ polyester jumpsuits, past the section of vintage vinyl, and beyond the high shelves crowned with innumerable pairs of leather cowboy boots, I found him searching through a rack of men’s checkered sports coats from the 1970s. “What do you think about this one?” he asked, holding up a particularly loud red, white, and grey-checked number. He tried it on. “Too big.” I said, glancing at the length of the sleeves. My mind was still
in “gamelan mode” in advance of the rehearsals and social events that would happen later that afternoon and evening; the vintage store, while fascinating, was not the current priority.

As I wandered back towards the front counter to look at the jewelry, a man with long gray hair standing behind it called out to me, wanting to know where I was from (he had evidently pegged Ian very quickly as a Boulder resident). I replied that I was from Florida, in town for a big musical concert event on campus. I wasn’t going to elaborate, but then he saw my sweatshirt—black, with the worlds “Gamelan Girl” emblazoned on the front in baby pink with hearts punctuating the loops of the letters. Immediately, the older man began describing the pots and gongs and metallic keyed instruments that the students played to the other, younger man behind the counter, the owner. I gave them the details of the day-long gamelan festival that would be happening on campus the next day and urged them to come. After all, it was not every day that the Colorado College gamelan ensemble would celebrate its twentieth birthday!

Colorado College (informally called CC) is a private liberal arts college located in Colorado Springs, Colorado, about sixty-five miles south of Denver. The campus itself is small—about four blocks each direction—which fits the college’s yearly enrollment of about 2,000 undergraduate students. It is abutted by the city downtown area to the east; to the west, the Southern Rockies frame the edge of the city, with the snowcapped Pike’s Peak presiding over its western skyline. Situated in a city that is dominated by military bases and that serves as the national headquarters for over eighty mostly Christian religious organizations, the College is often seen by its students and faculty to provide a breath of diversity and open-mindedness within the Colorado Springs metropolitan area.

In most official writings about the college, Colorado College’s NCAA Division I hockey team is often named as the school’s most important cultural asset. However, many of the musicians that play in the college’s several gamelan ensembles would argue that the gamelan is the second most influential, having enrolled hundreds of students over the last twenty years. Founded in 1993 by Dr. Victoria Levine and I Madé Lasmawan, the group has grown dramatically over the years. Starting with a single Balinese angklung ensemble, Gamelan Tujung Sari, the group now also includes a bamboo angklung set, a quartet of gender wayang instruments, a set of gamelan beleganjur instruments, and a Central Javanese court gamelan. The costumes for the accompanying dances have multiplied too, now containing the appropriate
costume parts for at least a dozen different dances. The pride of the college’s Indonesian performing arts collections, however, are the costumes for two barong, the mythological Balinese protector spirits. They may be the only two Balinese-made barong costumes in the United States that reside outside of the Indonesian embassies. Danced by two people, each barong costume resembles one of several different types of animals. The college has a barong ket—the most prevalent, lion-like barong—and barong macan, the tiger barong. The Colorado College mascot is a tiger; the corresponding barong has been danced at every homecoming parade since the costumen’s arrival in the mid-1990s.

It was due to the presence of Gamelan Tunas Mekar in nearby Denver that the college gamelan ever came to be established in Colorado Springs. Victoria (Vicki) Levine, professor of ethnomusicology and specialist on Native American music, had been teaching at the college since 1988. However, for the first few years, there were no world music ensembles at CC at the time, which she thought to be a crucial component for student education in world music. Long fascinated by Balinese gamelan, she requested the help of friend and colleague David Harnish to purchase a gamelan. With the additional aid of I Wayan Suweca, an eminent Balinese gamelan teacher who had long taught in North America, they were able to procure a Balinese gamelan angklung, its small range and straightforward traditional repertoire seen as assets for instructing a beginning, college-level group. Almost at the same time, in the fall of 1992, Levine learned of the group’s future instructor, I Madé Lasmawan. He had been invited to audition as the permanent instructor for Tunas Mekar and, following subsequent introductions at Colorado College, was selected to work with both groups.

The gamelan ensemble (including a Balinese dance program) is a regularly scheduled course that was first offered in the spring of 1993 and has remained the core of Colorado College’s world music ensemble offerings since that date. (The bluegrass ensemble has remained a steady presence at the college since the early 2000s; the African drumming group was unfortunately much shorter-lived). At odds with the college’s block plan, in which students take one course at a time over the course of eight “blocks” per year, the gamelan ensemble-class meets twice a week throughout the whole academic year. The course is co-taught by Levine and Lasmawan; the dance section is taught by Lasmawan’s wife, Ni Ketut Marni.

The current rehearsal space for the gamelan is a windowless yet cheery multi-purpose classroom in the basement of the Packard Music Building; the dance class, vaguely supported by
the dance department, is located elsewhere, and takes place right after the gamelan rehearsal. For each rehearsal, the students must pull the ornately carved instruments out of their tall glass cabinets and return them at the end. Additional costumes, instruments, and the barong are stored in Lasmawan’s office, a small room located next to the recital hall.

Each of the different instrumental ensembles is named and is used throughout the year by different groups of gamelan students within the class, depending on their skill levels and proclivities. Gamelan Tujung Sari (“lotus blossom”), the angklung-based group, features all of the current student players; Gamelan Santi Suara (“peaceful sound”) features more advanced players who are studying *gender wayang*. The Javanese gamelan, a recent addition, is still performed on infrequently. Students in the gamelan course may also study dance, although it is relatively rare for students to overlap with both groups at once. The gamelan offers at least two formal concerts on campus per academic year in addition to playing for other events within the university community.

Another facet of the gamelan ensemble is its international component: a CC-based music study abroad program to Lasmawan’s village, Bangah, in Bali. The first group of students traveled to Bangah in 1996, where they stayed for several weeks, housed with Lasmawan’s family, and learned about village culture and gamelan culture in-situ from Lasmawan, a CC-affiliated faculty member, and Balinese guest artists. The program has run every few years since, only having to be canceled in the wake of the Bali bombings in 2002, in 2009, and in 2013, when registration was closed in February and the program did not have enough enrolled students to proceed. Levine and Lasmawan hope to have the program run again in 2015.

While the gamelan at Colorado College has run successfully for twenty years, keeping the ensemble running successfully has not been without its difficulties. Levine recalls that when the gamelan first arrived and the students began to practice in a room down the hall from the art department, she would often have to listen to complaints from faculty members who wanted to know “What’s that noise?” and how to get it to stop. Though several music faculty members over the years have played with the ensemble and some do come to the concerts, few of them express overt support for the group. Additionally, while Levine has secured funding to grow the gamelan’s instrument and costume collection over the years, each improvement has come after a hard-fought grant application process.
Achieving institutional and financial support for Lasmawan and his family have also been central challenges in maintaining the gamelan program. Since Lasmawan originally arrived to teach at San Diego State under a temporary, non-immigrant J-1 visa, it was crucial for Lasmawan to receive a more permanent visa type to continue teaching, a process which took several years. Additional difficulties came in funding Lasmawan to a sufficient degree for him to remain in residence in the Colorado Springs area. Most of the gamelan groups that he would subsequently teach in the area could only pay him at the adjunct instructor rate—$1500-2000 per semester, barely enough to cover gasoline and wear on his car from traveling to each location to teach. Due to his lack of a doctorate or higher education degree from a recognized Western institution, it was impossible to employ Lasmawan as a full-time instructor. However, through her persistence, Levine was able to secure him a half-time faculty position to teach gamelan and to co-teach an Indonesian music course with her. The achievement of this part-time faculty position not only allowed for Lasmawan to continue teaching the Colorado College gamelans, but also provided the financial support for Lasmawan’s family that eventually allowed for his continuing work with the other local gamelans.

The program itself has grown substantially since its inauguration twenty years ago. As Levine recalls, the program was able to accumulate instruments and costumes slowly, with a few more pieces arriving every year. Although the size of the ensemble and the number of its affiliated dancers varies from semester to semester, it is almost always completely full; Levine recalls ruefully that she often “has to play the gong” because there are too many new students who need the opportunity to learn the other instruments. As with students who play with the other academic gamelans at Metropolitan State University and the University of Colorado at Boulder (aka CU-Boulder), students who are especially interested in the gamelan and Balinese culture will move from the university ensemble to also playing with Gamelan Tunas Mekar.

In May 2013, Colorado College celebrated its twentieth year of gamelan on campus by holding a daylong concert and lecture series, to which all of Lasmawan’s students and the majority of the members of the Balinese-American performing arts community were invited. There were lectures by four scholar-musicians who had been especially active in the gamelan’s history—David Harnish, Elizabeth Macy, I Nyoman Wenten, and Lisa Gold—as well as an address by Lasmawan himself. However, the highlight of the event were the performances: six of Lasmawan’s American gamelans (Gamelan Manik Kusuma, Gamelan Candra Wyoga, Gamelan
Genta Kencana, Gamelan Tujung Sari, Gamelan Santi Suara, and Gamelan Tunas Mekar) performed on five different types of gamelan, starting with the least experienced group and finishing with the most experienced. Following the performance by Tunas Mekar, a group composed of the invited guests (including myself) came together to form Gamelan Krama Bali and perform three pieces on the gamelan semaradana.

The guests started arriving in Colorado Springs on Thursday for the rehearsal beginning on Friday afternoon. Each gamelan had about two hours to practice their set in the concert hall before the next group would enter to rehearse; there was only Friday afternoon and evening, and a bit of Saturday morning, to have everyone practice on the stage. Although guests sitting inside the performance hall to watch the rehearsals remained respectfully quiet, outside the scene was riotous as old friends and new acquaintances came to meet within the context of the performance. This ramé atmosphere continued through the dinner, at which all of the attendees were asked to introduce themselves by name, group affiliation, and how long they had been performing. The college freshmen with their one semester of practice were welcomed just as warmly as the Balinese master musicians and dancers; after all, everyone was there for the same purpose—to celebrate the long heritage of gamelan at Colorado College, the center of this network of gamelans.

Fig. 2.4 Gamelan Tujung Sari performs “Merak Angelo” in Packard Hall
The night of the final performances, Packard Hall was filled to capacity. The audience comprised members of the gamelans as well as students and community members from many walks of life, some veterans of numerous previous gamelan performances, others new to the medium. After a sparkling set by Gamelan Tunas Mekar (including the much-lauded “Teruna Jaya”), Gamelan Krama Bali took the stage. The first three pieces performed by the Balinese and American gamelan-playing guest included Lasmawan’s composition “Sumiar,” a traditional piece, and a new composition by Asnawa. However, it was the last number—a traditional Barong and Rangda dance—that brought down the house. The Barong and Rangda dance has a basis in village ritual but has also proved a popular genre for tourist audiences across Bali. Performed over a series of repeated ostinato sections, the dance tells the story of the barong, the mythological forest protector spirit and representative of good, as he battles with Rangda, the evil witch-queen who wishes harm upon the villagers. Male dancers embody soldiers accompanying the barong; they begin to stab themselves with their kris (short daggers) during the performance as a result of Rangda’s evil magical influence. However, the power of the barong protects the men, eventually causing Rangda’s defeat. At the end, a priest brings the nearly defeated soldiers back to life and cleanses the audience of the magic that they have just witnessed.

The audience was hushed as the Colorado College barong began his dance, the gamelan’s angsels mirroring the barong’s every move. They gasped appropriately as Rangda, emerging from between the painted Balinese temple gate set that framed the stage door, began to threaten the barong. And then, something odd happened, just at the apex of tension in the fight—Putu, who was performing as the rear half of the barong, was ejected out from underneath the costume. Lasmawan later said that as he was drumming for that part, he could feel a spirit bounce off of his back before disappearing into the audience. Several of the college students who had played the male kris dancers noticed it too; one of them reported that despite stabbing himself as hard as he could, there were still no marks. The audience, probably not aware of the energy that some of the performers had felt onstage, did feel the overall energy of the performance; they erupted into applause, giving the piece and all of its performers a standing ovation.

After the concert, it was time to pack up and go home. While the dancers removed their costumes and makeup, the musicians began to take the gamelans back to load on to the trucks. Some of the college student performers, having expended a lot of energy in performance, began
to devour the fruit from the offerings that had been placed on stage. The stage was flooded with musicians, their families, and their friends for nearly an hour after the performance ended, chatting and congratulating Levine and Lasmawan on the lavish event. Finally, with the stage clear and the costumes stowed away, the musicians from the Rocky Mountains began to head home; the guests from other areas of the country would begin to leave the next day. On everyone’s lips was the same idea—why don’t we do this more often? Having talked to Levine earlier about the planning for the celebration, I knew why. But still, I had heard Levine and Lasmawan talking earlier in the evening. They had agreed; the Colorado College gamelans would at least need to have a thirtieth birthday party.

2.3.3 On the Road

In talking to both Lasmawan and Putu, it became clear that the travel from gamelan to gamelan constituted a large portion of Lasmawan’s career—and with that travel came a real sense of cultural differences between the gamelan communities. Putu recalls:

We definitely did a lot of traveling in that respect…I like to joke around with people that the car is like, my favorite place to sleep. Because every time I get into a car, even when I’m on so much caffeine, I just pass out. And it’s just one of those things where in driving where…It’s kind of dangerous; I fell asleep on the highway a few years back, but, luckily we weren’t going so fast. But yeah, traveling was a huge part of growing up. So I got to experience a huge, big chunk of the United States and how each sort of region or village in the States would be different from each other, all the gamelans were different and their sort of communal group learning process, which each had subtle differences.

I guess the most consistent factor would be that my father would go out and teach in his sort of way, and the outcome would be very similar, I guess. A lot of the good groups would practice before my father would get out there, but practice the repertoire that he had told them to do. But they would practice their way, and then when my dad got there, they would soon have to learn, very quickly, how to do it with him….and to just know his teaching style, and his patterns, and what’s important in music and what he wants predominantly shown, or what different sort of thing.

So we got to outside of being a weekly thing, like going to Denver weekly, or going to Wyoming weekly, going to Boulder weekly, we obviously had…Utah, Montana, Idaho, so, I like to say that my dad just took up the Front Range region, taking the mountain time zone by storm (Hiranmayena 2013)
I was thinking about this travel, this wide geographic range, as I was listening again to an interview with Lasmawan, the part about his musical study as a child and all of the different teachers who had come to the village:

Oh yeah, when I was in Bangah, our kecak teacher was from KOKAR—he was from far away, almost twenty miles—you know the monkey forest in Tabanan? Close to that. And also my music teacher when I was in elementary, no, middle school, he also graduated from KOKAR. Not from my area, also from thirty miles south in Bali (Lasmawan 2013)

As he kept listing the different teachers, he more often mentioned their village or general origin rather than their name—and they were all from about twenty to thirty miles away. In the middle of discussing Lasmawan’s middle school teacher, I interjected, “It’s kind of a long way, isn’t it? Thirty miles.” Lasmawan concurred; “But,” he said, “he lived at that time in Baturiti, so not far to go to teach, yeah” (Lasmawan 2013). Within the context of thinking about Bali, thirty miles is a long way—over halfway across the island, past countless villages with their own individual cultures and traditions. But listening to these stories again, thinking about Lasmawan’s current American context, gave the idea of “thirty miles” a new perspective.

Lasmawan’s biweekly commute from his house in the suburbs of Colorado Springs to the Colorado College campus is fairly short—only seven and a half miles, fifteen minutes by the interstate, if the roads are fairly clear. His current additional commutes to teach Gamelan Tunas Mekar, CU-Boulder, and Metropolitan State University might take sixty minutes and ninety minutes, respectively. In addition to instructing the Colorado gamelans an average of two times each per week, Lasmawan also makes a once weekly trek out to Laramie, Wyoming—a three-hour drive—to instruct the gamelan at the University of Wyoming. To reach all of the groups with this frequency, he might put over eight hundred miles on his car each week, driving for fifteen hours total to rehearse the groups for around twenty hours.
Among the other academic gamelans in Colorado, the gamelan gong kebyar at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado, Gamelan Eka Mudra ("First Gesture") is the eldest. The gamelan itself was already present on campus when Lasmawan began teaching there in 1995. However, it has not been actively played for almost ten years. Some of the instruments were lost over the university’s winter break in 2000, and after the Bali bombings in 2001, the university stopped offering the gamelan course. Lasmawan notes that the gamelan’s gong is still used for a yoga class, but the remainders of the instruments are stored away, long unplayed.

Following the Naropa Institute gamelan and that at Colorado College, the next oldest academic gamelan in Colorado is Gamelan Genta Kencana ("Holy Golden Sound") at CU-Boulder which was founded in 1998. The five-tone slendro tuning of this gamelan angklung set is unique to northern Bali; the remainder of angklung sets on the island use the four-tone tuning. This particular gamelan is unique to the United States as well; it is the only five-tone angklung gamelan that is actively played in the country. The gamelan at Metropolitan State University in
Denver, Colorado, is the newest of all of those that Lasamawan teaches at academic institutions. Founded in 2011 by Lasamawan and Dr. Peter Schimpf, Gamelan Manik Kusuma (“Magical Aroma”) is a four-tone angklung in slendro tuning. Despite both ensembles performing on angklung, the results are very different—both due to the different tunings and the level of skill of the performers.

Most of the gamelans that Lasamawan leads at the colleges and universities are gamelan angklung; the sets are inexpensive, portable, and the traditional repertoire can be less technically challenging to learn than that of some of the larger gamelan sets. Of the academic gamelans that Lasamawan teaches on a weekly basis, Gamelan Candra Wyoga (“Meditation on the Beauty of the Full Moon”) at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, Wyoming, is an outlier both in terms of its distance and in terms of its instrumentation. The set is a semar pegulingan—a type of courtly gamelan deriving from the madya (middle) period of Balinese history (17th-19th centuries). By the early mid-twentieth century, most of the Balinese semar pegulingan sets had disappeared fallen into disuse or been destroyed. However, at the end of the 20th century, the semar pegulingan instruments and repertoire were revived and many new sets were made—including this one, which was commissioned by the university and imported to Wyoming by Lasamawan in 1996. The ensemble, under the direction of Lasamawan and Dr. Rodney Garnett, performs both traditional semar pegulingan and new gamelan gong kebyar repertoire and is open both to students and community members.

In addition to these gamelans that are within a reasonable day’s driving distance from Colorado Springs, Lasamawan instructs several gamelans on a regular basis that are too far away for a regular commute. Currently, the two major gamelan ensembles in this category are both located in Missoula, Montana—almost a thousand miles away. Gamelan Manik Harum (“a powerful force that gives you a good feeling like an aroma”), a four-tone gamelan angklung, is a community ensemble founded by Dorothy Morrison in 2007. Lasamawan and his family have come to work with the group once yearly every year since the group’s founding, as well as helping Morrison found Kocong!, a 5th-grade student performing group located at Lewis and Clark Elementary School where Morrison teaches. The other gamelan in Missoula, Gamelan Jaya Budaya (“Victorious Culture”) is a four-tone gamelan angklung located at the University of Montana and co-taught by Lasamawan and Dr. Robert Ledbetter for a semester every other year as part of a rotating “world percussion” course. He has also been working on a yearly basis with

With the gamelans that Lasmawan instructs weekly, the rehearsal format for the semester’s class is somewhat similar. Although the courses contain differing amounts of input from the co-teachers at the different institutions, it is Lasmawan who chooses the repertoire for the group, basing his decisions on the skill levels of the older performers and in anticipation of the number of new players who will join in any given semester. He says that one of the nice things about teaching in the United States as opposed to Indonesia is:

> When you’re in Java, or in Bali, so they know, “Oh, this semester, they’re going to study ‘Tabuh Telu,’ this semester we’re going to play this piece,” you know. But here, we don’t have to put the name of the piece. It’s flexible, you know, meaning that we can adjust the repertory according to the quality of the students (Lasmawan 2013.)

Teaching a small piece on the first day to test the students’ playing skills, Lasmawan then assigns students to each part. As the semester progresses, Lasmawan gradually adds pieces and perfects the students’ performances. Although students and co-teachers seem mostly comfortable with this process, Levine noted that when she first began working with Lasmawan that sometimes he would try to add a small piece a few rehearsals before the concert, and she would have to tell him that the students could not learn the material that quickly. Although there are still sometimes last-minute changes to the program, Lasmawan too has realized that while that might work in Bali, it is less appreciated by Americans students enrolled in a course; now the pieces are chosen well in advance.

However, Lasmawan’s instruction style is a bit different for the groups that he visits consistently but on a less regular basis, perhaps for only one weekend per year. At the beginning of each semester, he will send the groups’ co-leader some notation for the pieces that the ensemble will play in the concert. Then, the ensemble rehearses all semester. About a week before the concert, Lasmawan and his wife Ketut will travel to each location to do last-minute instruction on the music and dance. While each group is semi-autonomous in that Lasmawan supplies the notation and, at the end, artistic guidance, because they receive this type of direction they all emerge from his same lineage and are ultimately in large part subject to his artistic vision because they receive the same kind of direction.
While the Rocky Mountain groups occupy Lasmawan’s teaching schedule and in large part compose his community during the American academic school year, they are only part of Lasmawan’s larger musical commitments, which span from his current home in Colorado all the way back to his family home in Bangah, Bali.
CHAPTER THREE

IN BALI: SANGGAR MANIK GALIH

Although Colorado has become Lasmawan’s American home, the village of Bangah plays a large part in his life. It is still the location of his childhood home. His sisters and one brother still live there with their families, and as the location of the family temple, Bangah still serves as the main religious and spiritual locus of family life. Lasmawan counts himself as lucky; he has managed to return home for a few months in the summer for almost every year since taking up primary residence in the United States, quite often continuing this work within this Balinese village framework. This chapter describes how Lasmawan has been able to maintain and develop ties to his family and community in Bangah, and how the regular flow of foreign students to the village every summer has impacted both the lives of the students and the community life of the village.

3.1 Situating Bangah, Tabanan, Bali

“Head north, almost to Baturiti, and turn left at the sign for Air Panas Angseri.” Like many places in Bali, the village of Bangah is not hard to find—if you know in advance where you are going. The second time that I came to Bangah in the summer of 2012 I was picked up in Sanur by I Madé Daya and I Madé Dema, two of Lasmawan’s nephews. They were farmers turned hired drivers for the summer, when many of Lasmawan’s guests need to travel up to the small village with their luggage. The two men in their twenties certainly knew where they were going; Daya, with a kreték (Indonesian clove cigarette) constantly protruding from his mouth, skillfully pulled the small SUV through a maze of tiny roads, gradually taking us north. Daya, Dema and I chattered in Indonesian about the weather (so hot down in the south!), who would be coming to Lasmawan’s compound that summer, and Daya’s many tattoos, which I had not noticed upon meeting him briefly before. We made one quick stop; Daya wanted to buy arak and tuwak, Balinese rice “moonshine,” and knew a fellow who sold them in one of the nearby villages. He hopped out of the car with empty liter glass gasoline bottles. He returned to the car moments later, bottles full, and we climbed higher into the mountains, the cooler air whipping refreshingly into the open windows of the car.
The village of Bangah is located in the central, mountainous region of Tabanan province, south of the town of Baturiti and east of the city of Tabanan, near the villages of Apuan, Marga, and Abian Luang. Although in the more mountainous part of the island, with climate conditions to match, Bangah is still at a much lower altitude than the island’s highest mountains around Pura Besakih, the large temple located in the mountains at Mt. Agung, the island’s highest and most sacred peak. Still, the land is hilly; the winding roads have steep grades in places, and the houses and buildings perch upon the hilltops, their attached lands sloping down quickly towards the rivers or into the verdant terraced rice paddies.

The main road leading past Bangah and into Baturiti is always clogged with traffic. Locals on scooters whizz past the small houses, warungs, the internet café, and small chain convenience stores. They whizz past the behemoth tour buses that transport mostly Javanese and Japanese visitors, lumbering along the narrow main roads towards the beaches in the north. The road to Bangah is much quieter on normal days, with only the occasional motorbike passing the villages. Around a few bends and down the hill from the road to Baturiti stands Lasmawan’s new house and sanggar. It stands up on a hill, outside of the village lands proper, and is not connected to his family properties. Lasmawan had acquired this and several other properties during Bali’s
financial crash of the late 1990s, and had been able to add on gradually to the property over the years until the sanggar was built.

Farther down into the village, newer houses wrap around the old family compounds with long winding paths leading almost through others’ yards to reach the main portions of the older buildings. Lasmawan’s family house is still among these, a compact set of structures located at the end of one of these small footpaths. Interpersed among the houses are civic structures—the balé banjar (building for banjar-related meetings and gatherings), the elementary school, a co-op—but there are no restaurants and no stores in the Western sense. Throughout the village but particularly at its borders are located the village temples. Each village in Bali is required to have at least three different temples—Pura Puseh (the origin temple, devoted to the village founders), Pura Desa (village temple, for spirits who protect villagers in their daily lives), and the Pura Dalem (temple of the dead). There are also four other temples at the village: Pura Merajapati (also associated with the dead), Pura Melanting, (temple of the traders), Pura Arak Api (the taksu temple, devoted to the spirit of divine inspiration) and Pura Alas Harum (the army temple). Three other temples that are associated with the village lie outside its boundaries: Pura Pucak Sari at the neighboring village Abian Luang, Pura Beratan at Beratan Lake, and Pura Teratai Bang at the Botanical Garden.

Bangah is small. Its population still numbers in the hundreds, and many of its younger residents are beginning to leave to find work in other areas of Bali. While the neighboring town of Baturiti has recently seen a large influx of East Javanese workers, in contrast, the majority of Bangah’s residents were either born in the village or married into local families. Although some of the town’s residents have obtained other part-time employment, the core of the community still consists of farmers who go out daily to work in the familial plots that abut the residential areas of the village.

Bangah’s location near the famous hot springs and off the road to well-known tourist destinations to the north brings it relatively close to national and international tourist culture. The hot springs—a natural source of hot water at which has been built a set of pools and bathhouses—seems mostly unknown to foreign tourists, but attracts visitors from as far away as Denpasar and East Java. Although the tourist buses still rumble by, the local resort hotel on the main road, the Saranam Eco-Resort, recently went out of business. And Bangah itself remains relatively untouched, the vast majority of its foreign visitors in one way or another connected to
Lasmawan or his family. In addition to maintaining expected social and family ties, the village provides what Lasmawan considers to be an ideal atmosphere for foreign students coming to learn the basics of Balinese gamelan and dance.

3.2 Musical Life in Bangah

After turning off of the main road and descending the hill into Bangah (particularly by foot), the most notable sound is that of relative quiet. In the early morning, it may be the quiet of a few chickens clucking, broken only by the rustle of women putting out their laundry to dry. In the afternoon and early evening, electronics take over the soundscape: a distant TV playing the news or a sports game, a radio playing American classic rock or airing the sound from a recent Balinese dance-drama. At night, the noises of frogs and crickets predominate before the pre-dawn ushers in more stillness. Occasionally, a motorbike passes through, the whine of the small engines fading quickly into the otherwise still air. It is very quiet—that is, until the gamelans play, and a prelude of friendly chatter as the musicians assemble gives way to the ringing sound of bronze echoing across the valley.

The region of Tabanan has historically not been esteemed as a particular stronghold of the Balinese traditional performing arts, despite the handful of well-known musicians and new compositions that have emerged from the region in the last half-century. In the first half of the twentieth century, much artistic attention was focused on the northern areas of the island, where the tourist industry and the gamelan gong kebyar style first took hold; the second half of the century saw this focus shift to the south, where more prosperity brought in large part by the rise of tourism allowed for more time and money village-wide to be spent on the arts, both for the tourists and for more local purposes. Though the region of Tabanan is home to Tanah Lot, a stunning sea temple that has been turned into a major tourist attraction, the area as a whole is relatively less-visited by foreigners. Aside from the clear commercialization evident in the region’s capital city, Tabanan, the area displays less overt foreign influence than many areas of the island.

The performing arts in Bangah reflect this relative sense of isolation from the more cosmopolitan wealth and life-patterns of the bigger cities, with more resources directed towards traditional artistic goals. Currently, the village contains a gamelan semar pegulingan (a gong duwe or sacred gamelan that is only played for the sacred barong dances, “Tapakan Ratu Gede Barong and Rangda”), a gamelan gong kebyar, and a gamelan beleganjur. Though it was a very
active location musically during Lasmawan’s childhood, the village musical group participation has waxed and waned in recent years. With so many younger musicians moving to other locations to find work, a number of places in the Bangah gamelans are left unfilled, and the question of which villagers should fill these spots is the subject of dramatic debate. As a result, the village gamelan practiced relatively infrequently—not at all, during the two consecutive months that I visited the village—and performs only at religious ceremonies in Bangah or occasionally in neighboring villages. Revived interests in gamelan performance have more recently led to the creation of a new semar pegulingan group in the village; however, it is still a young group that has yet to become well-established.

Although this particular issue of maintaining a complete set of players for the gamelan group seems to be recent as of the last few years, there are other indications that the village gamelan has been relatively inactive for a long time in comparison to village or sanggar ensembles in other areas that practice at least once every week. Edmundo Luna, one of Lasmawan’s first American students to come to Bali in the 1990s, recalls that during his first visit to Bangah in 1996, the only local musical activity was with the village beleganjur group that had been practicing for a series of local competitions (some of which they won, Lasmawan added proudly to a retelling of this story). However, the last of these intensive musical practices now took place over fifteen years ago. While community memory is strong within Bangah and the musicians are still able to perform local and standardized gamelan repertoire from memory for temple ceremonies, there is no skilled dance teacher who lives permanently in the area to teach the next generation of dancers, and the village gamelan musicians themselves primarily rely on old standards appropriate for the temple ceremonies rather than working on new repertoire.

For an outsider who has become familiar with the Balinese performing arts through watching tourist shows in Ubud, it might seem strange to watch the village gamelan performing primarily ceremonial versions of Baris, Rejang, and Barong, the dancers—mostly with little formal training outside of learning the few ritual dances—performing in relatively simple, well-worn costumes. However, while rarely highlighted either in tourist publications or in academic publications about Bali, not all Balinese villages have an active gamelan ensemble. Of the villages that do, very few possess the consistent emphasis on performance that has become the hallmark of Sukawati, Peliatan, Pengosekan, Batubulan, Singapadu, and a number of other
southern villages in recent years. In this context, the performance profile of Bangah on a village-wide basis can be seen as somewhat normal within the grander continuum of Balinese performing arts activity.

Like Bangah, many villages additionally do contain sekaa gong, or gamelan clubs, that are composed of villagers but are maintained independently of the village groups. Like the village gamelan, a sekaa gong may perform in conjunction with the official village gamelan at village temple ceremonies, individually for family or private events, or in competition, with the latter of these being much more likely to be taken over by the private group than the official village one. When Lasmawan’s father was alive and working with his group in Bangah, it provided a stable alternative to the village ensemble, especially in terms of presenting different repertoires than were possible to perform on the village set. However, Lasmawan now heads the primary sekaa gong in Bangah, despite being physically present in Bali for an average of two months per year. Additionally, he mainly coaches two groups—one comprised mostly of foreign students and one comprised entirely of village women. While the women’s group has proved to become a community fixture even in Lasmawan’s absence, the student ensemble’s membership is very fluid, varying from year to year and even day to day as guests come and go. The introduction of these groups into the community provides a notable twist in the functioning of the local gamelan scene.

3.3 Sanggar Manik Galih and Its Gamelans

The gamelans that Lasmawan’s family had owned remained stored on a balé within his family home for many years before being repurposed, even after his father passed away and the groups that he had led ceased to practice. However, Lasmawan’s family house, though well-constructed and well-maintained, is located on a relatively small parcel of land, behind another family house in the village center. While the family temple in particular is spacious, the other balé crowd together, with members of the family living in close proximity to one another. When Lasmawan first brought over students to study and visit in the mid-1990s, they stayed at this main or another minor family house, but it soon became apparent that he would need more space

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26 There are a number of different spellings for this same word: sekehe, seka, sekaa, sekaha. In this dissertation, I will use “sekaa.”
for family, students, and gamelan instruments. This was the point at which Lasmawan purchased land for the new sanggar.

Since that time, he has been slowly building on to the compound, adding buildings as time and money have allowed. Despite the fact that it has been being constructed slowly over the last fifteen years, the compound is still very much a work in process; there is always “one more thing” to add. In 2011, Lasmawan finally named his new home and gathering place for the gamelan students: Sanggar Manik Galih.

The compound itself closely resembles the layout of a traditional Balinese family house, with a balé dauh (dwelling of the family head, where Lasmawan and his family live over the summer), a kitchen balé (pawon), a rice balé (jineng), the balé dangin (where the manusa yadnya, the life-cycle ceremonies occur and which currently houses some kendang and gender), and the family temple area, all located around an open courtyard and all facing the correct geographic directions according to Balinese Hindu cosmology. However, more unusually, it also contains a number of guest rooms to house his (primarily American) students, friends, and other
guests who come to stay or study during the summer. An unfinished storage space also contains a Western drum kit, which Lasmawan’s sons and sometimes his guests practice while taking a break from practicing gamelan. The focal point of the compound, however, is the large, covered, flat, raised stage which houses the gamelans. On the far left end of the stage sits a complete gamelan angklung. Behind it are stored the beleganjur instruments and spare kendang. Across from and facing the angklung sits a full gamelan gong kebyar set. The center of the stage is left empty for the dancers to practice, either alone or with the gamelan.

![Fig. 3.3 Stage at Sanggar Manik Galih](image)

Although usually the stage is very tidy with all of the instruments and panggul put away, at the end of rehearsals one can often find *tinggalan*, left behind items, that evoke the three different types of musicians and dancers who practiced on the stage during the course of a single day. On a single day, one might find an American student’s notebook containing core melody notations; a Balinese girl’s plastic purse, covered in cartoon characters; a village woman’s spare scarf, brought to ward off the cool night breezes when traveling to the compound by motorcycle. The items do not stay lost for long. In the summer, when Lasmawan is in town, the three mostly-distinct groups who practice at the sanggar—the American student-musicians, the village girls who are learning traditional dance from Ibu Ketut, and the women’s gamelan—generally have a combined total of three to six rehearsals per day. Between those rehearsals, small groups of
foreign students can be found at the main stage or at the balé dangin, practicing drumming, gender, or other parts, either together or separately. During summer, at least in that corner of Bangah, the air is filled with the sound of gamelan practice for twelve hours a day.

The student gamelan groups, described in more detail throughout this chapter, change size and composition depending on which individual students and student groups make plans with Lasmawan to come study for the summer. (The education, performances, and personal growth of the students studying with Lasmawan in Bali will be the focus of several later sections.) These groups grew naturally out of his teaching career in the US as an increasing number of students began to come, including the first study abroad groups associated with Colorado College.

The study group of local dancers also grew naturally out of the continued presence of Lasmawan and his family at the compound. Although Lasmawan knows the basics of male dance, both through his education at SMKI and from following dancers’ movements as a drummer, there are other men in Bangah who are capable of teaching young male dancers enough to perform ritual dances such as Baris. However, Ketut is much in demand as a dance teacher for the young village girls. While many of the village women studied dance when they were young, Ketut is the only practiced dance teacher who regularly visits the village. Her students—about fifteen in number, ranging in age from young girls to teenagers—practice every weekday afternoon for an hour or two. The girls range in experience from beginners to more advanced dancers. They learn primarily modern group dance standards that are typically used in temple ceremonies, such as “Rejang Dewa” and “Gabor.” More advanced students learn more individualistic and more modern dances, such as “Merak Angelo,” a peacock dance that was composed and choreographed for performance at ISI in 2008. The pieces that the girls practice primarily depend upon the pieces that will be performed by any of the Bangah gamelan groups during the summer so that the girls may dance. When there are also American dance students present, they will sometimes study with Ketut alone, or join in with the Balinese dancers to practice and perform for the temple ceremonies.

Of the different groups of students learning and practicing at the sanggar, the most recent addition is the Bangah women’s group that just began rehearsals in May 2012—although the group is in many ways a revival rather than a new creation. The villagers had started a gamelan group consisting entirely of young women from Bangah about twenty years before. Although the
group had practiced successfully for several years, one by one the women began to drop out. Many of them had gotten married and begun to raise children during their stint playing gamelan, and the strain of managing a family in large part precluded their continued work with the group. However, in 2012, there was sufficient interest to re-form the group under the tutelage of Lasmawan and I Wayan Bukit, a local gamelan musician who would be in Bangah year-round and could continue instructing the group.

This new women’s group consists mostly of women who are either past childbearing age or whose children are sufficiently grown up to be left at home for the two hours, six days a week, that the women practice. They are currently learning to play the gamelan gong kebyar—all of the parts, although the instructor would generally double the leading drum part, and male village musicians would fill in some of the other parts if necessary for a performance.

Every night just before seven, scores of motorbikes would begin to pull up at the compound gate with women riding singly or in pairs from the different parts of the village. Following a brief hello in Balinese to the members of Lasmawan’s family who were present and some nodding and smiling to greet the foreign students, the women would then return to the end of the compound towards the stage, laughing and talking to each other until rehearsal started.

Each rehearsal lasts for two hours from seven to nine at night, with a break for coffee, tea, and snacks in the middle. (Unlike the custom of predominantly male groups, most of the women did not smoke). During the summer of 2012, the women were primarily working on simplified versions of two pieces—the traditional “Tabuh Telu Kembang Kuning” and a composition of Lasmawan’s, “Sumiar”—both of which Lasmawan’s student groups were also learning at the time. Approximately one hour would be devoted to each piece, with the schedule guided by Lasmawan or Bukit. The first portion of rehearsal would be spent correcting any memory or technical errors in the parts, while in the second portion, they would focus on tightening the transitions between the sections, increasing the tempo, or working on other refinements. Playing the pieces dozens of time every night, they created a consistent soundtrack for the compound at night, their studies guiding the transition between dusk and hard dark.

I sat in with the gamelan a few times when a player was absent, mostly with the women on reyong, to experience their style of rehearsal and chat some with the women. They repeated sections endlessly, with Bukit running between the instruments to re-demonstrate forgotten parts while Lasmawan worked in the front with the women were holding the group together on
kendang. Compared to the necessity for quick memorization of new material that I had experienced studying gamelan in other contexts, the rehearsal style seemed slow, the individual parts actually made more challenging for their monotonous repetition. It was clear that the levels of musical skill and level of attention varied greatly among the players; even a week or two into rehearsal, some of the women could play their parts perfectly with the others every time. Others could play the parts perfectly sometimes but would lose concentration during others, and some would have difficulty placing their parts within the larger musical framework.

These differences in skill to some degree corresponded with differences in experience. Some of the women—including Lasmawan’s sister-in-law, who was playing kendang—had played when the women’s group had existed before. Others had never touched a panggul (gamelan mallet) before. Despite the differences in skill and experience level among the players, none of them seemed concerned about the speed at which they as individuals or a group were learning the new pieces. One evening, Lasmawan held practice for the American students during the women’s coffee break. Afterwards, I asked some of the women what they thought about their experience in comparison to the foreigners, many of whom were already playing at a much more advanced level, one woman replied “It’s already been twenty years for me;” another noted that she was “a real beginner,” unlike the students who had come over from the United States to learn. In our brief, polite conversations—mostly about family or other hobbies—all of them suggested that of their daily tasks, gamelan was one of those that they did purely for fun. It mattered less where they started as musicians, but rather that they kept playing and improving.

As the summer progressed and the weather grew cooler in the mountains, the women started wearing an increasing number of layers of clothing to rehearsal, including large, puffy jackets, knitted hats, and scarves. They would take off mittens to play, much to the amusement of the American students—as one commented, clad still in shorts and a tee-shirt, “It’s only sixty degrees!” But even the layers of clothing did not hinder them; after almost two months playing, they were ready to perform for the first time, at an odalan (anniversary celebration for a temple). Although the pieces that they performed at the ceremony were not yet perfect—they had to restart one during the performance—the women smiled as they played.

With Lasmawan’s departure date drawing nearer, the women’s group reached a critical test: would they keep practicing, even if their main leader was absent for ten months? Pak Katok, one of the local middle-aged farmers who came often to play with the students, almost laughed
When I asked him what he thought. “Tidak,” he responded, shaking his head decisively. He continued in Indonesian, stating in essence that they would practice for a little while, but then everyone will get busy and lose interest, like last time. But he was wrong. Over a year later, the group was still practicing consistently every week. For now, a new and seemingly permanent seed has been sewn in the community. Lasmawan wants to expand his number and types of groups even further, creating a village group in which anyone—man or woman, adult or child—is welcome to come learn how to play gamelan.

Sanggar Manik Galih. The name was emblazoned on a wall in the compound in 2011, signifying the creation of his new private gamelan club in the compound in Bangah. In 2012 Lasmawan expanded the name to encompass not only the artistic activity that takes place within that compound, but also that in America through his Facebook group, “Sanggar Manik Galih: Bangah and Colorado,” to which he posts announcements about the various groups’ activities. Knowing that naming is important to the Balinese, I asked him about the name “Manik Galih.” The name, he says, means “like a rice seed,” a little kernel that contains the potential for new growth. Rice is the sacred food that sustains the Balinese. Like a grain of rice, Sekar Manik Galih has the potential to grow and flourish, sustaining those who are a part of it. Like “Tunas Mekar,” the name “Manik Galih” represents auspicious new beginnings—for Balinese and American students, both in Bali and in America.

3.4 Innocents Abroad: Teaching Foreign Students in a Balinese Village

The sun rises early in the mountains in Tabanan. Although the American college students emerge from their rooms “early” by their own normal standards—between seven and eight in the morning—the Balinese members of the family and household staff have already been up for hours, especially the women, who have long since traveled to the markets and begun to prepare the day’s meals. After a cold shower—there is finally running water at the compound, but no hot water as of yet—the students flip-flop their way to the front of the compound, to the small dining area attached to the kitchen where they are presented with the option of “kopi atau teh”—coffee or tea, two of the words that most of the students manage to pick up during their several weeks of music study. Back in the main part of the kitchen, Ketut and one or more women hired from the village to cook have prepared breakfast, generally a twist on Western pancakes or French toast, often served with banana or papaya. With beverage and plate in hand, the students then either sit in the dining area or out on the edges of the balé to chat and eat. Sometimes, one of the students
or Lasmawan’s children would be up earlier, practicing gender or kendang even before breakfast appeared.

I usually arrived early and sat in the dining area, where Lasmawan preferred to take his morning coffee. The other students and I would chat with him and hear his plans for the group that day—rehearsals, excursions, anything new. Lasmawan often launched into short stories—about the musical pieces that we were playing, about the status of the village, and about Balinese Hindu thought. Sometimes he was even specifically prompted to do so. During my stay in 2012, one of the CU-Boulder/Tunas Mekar college students was reading Nietzsche and other twentieth century philosophers in his spare time, and would bring up questions from the readings as they related to Balinese Hindu philosophy. Lasmawan would always respond patiently, taking even what appeared to be an unrelated question as an opportunity to expand upon the students’ knowledge of Balinese culture.

After breakfast, when the sun was just starting to get hot around nine or ten, the first rehearsal of the day would begin. Sometimes it would involve the full group on angklung or gong kebyar, learning a new piece or revisiting a tricky spot from the piece that everyone had worked on the day before. Sometimes it would be an intensive work session on technique with kendang or gender, or some of the students present would work on beleganjur. After the first rehearsal was lunch—rice, meat, vegetables, and fruit, served much in the same manner as before—followed by the second rehearsal of the day. Late afternoon always brought the arrival of the village girl dancers; the foreigners would take individual leisure time or might play soccer in front of the stage with Lasmawan’s sons, creating a cacophonous scene as the ball was sometimes accidentally kicked up into the dancers’ formations. After the dancers left there might be more rehearsal, or straight on to dinner, right around sunset. Then the women would come; at this point, the foreign students would often make a run to an internet café or the Indomaret, as much to avoid hearing the same two pieces again as to reconnect with the outside world. And then there might be night rehearsal, or not; and then there might be a chess game and drinking and smoking, or not. Any time that the students and Lasmawan’s nephews would gather at night, however—almost every night—there was trilingual teasing and universal laughing. By eleven, everyone was in bed, ears saturated in gamelan, stomachs full of rice, ready to sleep until it would all start again the next day.
3.4.1 Students and Schedule

Although Lasmawan maintains a number of personal and professional commitments while in Bali—to his family, to the community in Bangah, to other colleagues in the Balinese performing arts world—in large part, the rhythm of his pedagogical life in the summers revolves around teaching foreign students within the compound in Bangah. The students themselves are from a variety of geographical locations, musical backgrounds, and levels of familiarity with Lasmawan and his family. Male and female, teenagers to near-retirees, long-term gamelan players and new players, students who consider themselves to be professional musicians and those who are amateur players, those of Anglo, Asian, and other ethnic backgrounds—it is always a mix at the compound of Sanggar Manik Galih.

The core of his students come from the different American gamelan groups with which he teaches or has partnerships. The most permanent of these arrangements are with Colorado College, which offers a bi-annual academic-credit course for students to come study music, dance, and culture. Running several weeks each, the courses include lectures on history, culture, and the arts; music and dance rehearsals and performances; guest lectures and demonstrations by practitioners of other Balinese art forms; and planned excursions to temples, tourist sites, and cultural events across Bali, as appropriate. As the formal courses that often include up to twenty students from a single university, the activity schedule and pieces intended for practice and performance are often planned out months in advance, with small changes to accommodate opportunities and events that arose after the original planning period.

Although the university groups perhaps demand the strictest schedules in terms of keeping everyone logistically organized, these students are not the only ones to come study with Lasmawan. Portions of the community gamelan group from Missoula have also visited on a semi-regular basis, and plans are in the works to bring over all of both Gamelan Tunas Mekar and Gamelan Bintang Wahyu from Brigham Young University during the summer of 2014. In addition to these larger groups, smaller groups or individual students also come to study. Some are from Lasmawan’s other groups—for example, the handful of younger members of Gamelan Tunas Mekar who came in the summer of 2012 for several weeks—whereas others are friends of people who knew Lasmawan, or were advised to study with him by their own gamelan teachers. Perhaps the most far-flung example is Luke Geaney, a British man in his early thirties who has been coming to study gamelan with Lasmawan off and on for several years. A percussionist who
had become fascinated by Balinese gamelan, Luke had tried and failed to find a closeby gamelan with which to practice in London—as he noted on many occasions, ruefully, “Javanese gamelan is much more popular in England than the Balinese.” But then he had heard about Lasmawan through a friend. Luke recalls, “And then I sort of spoke with him briefly on Facebook and he invited me to come out last summer” (Geaney 2012). Luke booked a flight and came to study with Lasmawan. They had never before met.

Groups, individual students, and other guests come and go fluidly at Lasmawan’s compound. Although he is worried that the approximately twenty beds within the compound will not be enough to accommodate all of his visitors at once in the coming summers, in the past, Lasmawan has always had an open-door policy with his students: when he is there, they are welcome to come and study. Although there are exceptions for holidays and group field trips, the students generally assemble and practice on the schedule described above. There is a little wiggle room to account for jam karet (“rubber time”), an Indonesian concept that denotes that events will start when they start, which is often a bit after the announced start time. But, every morning it is the same: when all of the students are awake, fed, and gathered and Lasmawan is ready, then the lessons begin.

### 3.4.2 Practice and Pedagogy

“Ka-pak-ka-pak-dag-dug-dag-dug-dag-dug-dug-dug.” The sound of the interlocking drum patterns rumbles across the compound, where he is teaching four students the basics of pepanggulan drumming, the style that uses a mallet. Having reviewed the basic strokes with all of the students, he has now divided them into pairs to practice several common interlocking parts. The exercise is difficult; even if all of the students intellectually understand the patterns that they are recreating, their coordinational abilities vary widely, and the rhythm slips between locking in together, being “swung,” and having one or more students drop out all together. A few more days of individual practice, however, and soon the group is playing in unison, ready to start trying to apply their pracice within the larger group context.

Although Lasmawan works individually or in small groups with all of the students who stay in the compound to study music, the focus of the summer study is primarily not on individual lessons, but learning within a group setting. Thus, if a larger community or university group is present at the compound, individual visitors or smaller groups of students often learn
and practice the material that the larger group is working to perform within the full rehearsals, on whichever gamelan—angklung or gong kebyar—that larger group has chosen to learn. If no larger group is present, the smaller groups and individual students will work on material to play at the temple ceremonies in Bangah, joined by Lasmawan’s sons and a few members of the larger Bangah gamelan community if necessary to complete the correct instrumentation. Smaller groups of students may additionally sit in with the Bangah village gamelan at performances in order to fill in those parts.

Because of the mixed nature of the groups—foreign students who have played a piece before mixed with others who have not, mixed with Balinese musicians who have performed the piece—students learn in a number of different ways. For Lasmawan, it is most important to place students on instruments appropriate to their playing level and particular aptitudes so that they can efficaciously learn melodic lines, rhythmic patterns, and coordinated physical gestures and movements, as well as follow cues or give cues on their own. Lasmawan said that “At first, when I began to teach music in America, it was very difficult to decide which students to place where, to interpret in another culture what the students’ skills were”; however, after twenty years of working with non-Balinese students, Lasmawan can usually determine where to place a student within a single rehearsal (Lasmawan 2012b).

In placing beginning students in the ensemble, Lasmawan will sometimes draw on their previous experiences as musicians to find them a comfortable place within the ensemble—for example, one of his students who had played in the UMT gamelan for one semester before coming to Bali was a skilled flute player; thus, Lasmawan had her play suling—the bamboo flutes that elaborate on the melody—before having her begin to try to play jegogan while in Bali. However, this is somewhat atypical; most students, even those who have played percussion before, will learn at least one piece on the core melody instruments—jegogan and calung—before moving on to play the elaborating parts.

Individuals who are learning to play the core melody parts may be given basic, numerical written notation so that they may begin by playing the parts completely and correctly. For core instruments such as the jegogan and calung, both of which are played in pairs, often one player of the pair will be accustomed to the instrument while the other is a very new gamelan player. In this case, the second player learns not only by using the notation, but also by copying the technique and timing of the first. For the faster, interlocking parts—gangsa and reyong—each
section generally contains several students who have already learned those parts for each piece by playing in one of Lasmawan’s ensembles in the United States. The other half of the section is generally composed of students who are new to playing that particular piece, but not completely new to the instrument; they will watch and follow along as their neighbors play the piece, often at full tempo, and attempt to follow along. All of these parts are generally learned within the context of the full rehearsal, as each section of a piece is repeated until most of the students are able to play their lines. This latter method, called maguru panggul (literally, “teaching with the mallet”) is common within Balinese gamelan groups, particularly when they are playing traditional repertoires that many of the ensemble members already know (Bakan 1999: 282-285).

The ugal in the gong kebyar plays a leading role in the ensemble. Played by only one person on one instrument, its melodic lines—which resemble both the core melody and the kotekan but are completely different from either—are used to cue the other instruments and contain semi-improvised flourishes and cues for this purpose. If the part is being played by someone who is learning the piece for the first time, it is one of the few cases in which Lasmawan truly teaches directly, playing the part backwards on the opposite side of the instrument, expecting the student to follow along until the part is learned.

In the United States, Lasmawan generally plays the leading kendang parts for the groups by himself; in Bali, where he has more time to work individual students, he will teach the students the kendang parts in a separate practice, only beginning to instruct students on the instrument after they have achieved sufficient mastery in playing elaborated melody on the gangsa. He often teaches students of similar levels in small groups of three to five students with each person following along on their own instrument. With beginners and intermediate players, he often starts by demonstrating the different hand drum strokes, checking to make sure that the students make sufficiently good sounds on dug, dag, pung, and pak, making sure that beginners are achieving the basic shape and helping the intermediate players refine the tone of each stroke. Next, he will give rudiments, specific exercises that students can use to achieve good, consistent sounds and move with fluidity between the different strokes. This might comprise the entirety of a single lesson, as he leaves the students for a day or two to practice the movements on their own.

After a few sessions of working on the particular strokes, he will begin to teach a longer pattern. In the summer of 2012, students learning kendang primarily focused on learning patterns
that are used to accompany the 8-beat *gilak* gong cycle pattern, which is central to many male solo dances and to much traditional beleganjur repertoire; the *lelonggoran* pattern, another popular 16-beat cycle that is often used in female group dance pieces; and the specific interlocking ostinato patterns that are used for “Sumiar” and “Tabuh Telu Kembang Kuning.” Although Lasmawan would often still play the lead drumming role, for the simpler pieces that the group would play, he would often assign one of the students to play with him.

Although the choice of assigning the parts for different pieces is in some part pragmatic, Lasmawan’s emphasis is always to find an appropriate level of challenge for each student. For many of the students who had played with him in Rocky Mountain groups, their period of study in Bali constituted a prime time for them to increase their skill level. For example, Aleanna, a student who had primarily played calung with Gamelan Tunas Mekar, still played that part on some of the repertoire that she learned in her month spent in Bangah, but also began to play the *polos* gangsa part on others of the pieces—the more “onbeat” of two interlocking gangsa parts. Shawn, who had primarily played *polos* gangsa in Colorado, was asked to derive—on the fly—the other, more “offbeat” interlocking *sangsih* part from the *polos* part on pieces that he already knew from playing with Tunas Mekar. Since I had never before played much of the dance repertoire that the students were playing in Bangah that summer, I primarily learned the gangsa parts, which are key to getting to know and understand a new piece. However, I was assigned to the ugal part on “Sumiar” (discussed in depth below). Although the piece itself is straightforward and the ugal part is not technically difficult, the challenge presented was to learn how to give good cues from that instrument to the ensemble within the types of repertoire where that is important. Even guests of Lasmawan’s who were experienced gamelan players were given small challenges—to join in on the core melody parts at performances for pieces that they had never before played.

While Lasmawan would stop during rehearsals occasionally to correct parts—especially if they were exposed group-section solos—the format of the rehearsals generally involved running sections or entire pieces straight through, with the assumption that players new to learning the piece would eventually pick up on both the overall form of the piece and their individual parts through continued repetition. Lasmawan’s students—particularly those who had played with Gamelan Tunas Mekar—were accustomed to this tactic, whereas some who had only played with the university groups required more time spent specifically learning a certain part.
However, even the students who were used to learning from observation were sometimes caught off guard. Instead of learning a piece for performance over the course of a few months, the group might be expected to learn it in one or two days. Additionally, even for pieces that certain students already knew, performance tempi were often a surprise. As Putu has noted, “You kind of get that when my father comes back to the States after going to Bali, like, jumping into teaching or something…his timing is a lot more…more ahead of the beat, pushes it…” (Hiranmayena 2013). While some students took issue with this style of learning—“He doesn’t really teach, does he?”—most others seemed to accept this pedagogical method as a good personal challenge.27

In addition to student experiences being shaped by the individual instruments that they were learning, the flexibility and changeability of the overall schedule at the compound also affected the learning experiences of the students who come to study with Lasmawan in Bangah. While an individual or a group might come to the compound primarily interested in learning gamelan gong kebyar repertoire, necessary preparations for performing at temple ceremonies or the predetermined learning plans for other groups might have those same students learning a substantial amount of angklung or beleganjur repertoire as well. Conversely—as was or is the case with several of Lasmawan’s groups that possess only an angklung set in the United States—coming to Bali meant that those students are able to also learn to play on gamelan gong kebyar; in general, the expanded range and sound of that set of instruments as compared to the angklung, students frequently noted, presented entirely new sonic context for the gamelan sound. Others described a similar effect in learning the same piece on one tuning system of gamelan (angklung or gong kebyar) that they had previously learned on the other; having to re-conceptualize the piece aurally and physically gave the student musicians new insight into what elements were central to each piece, and how the different ensemble type influenced both the playing technique and the character of the piece. The added availability of the instruments—both the full gamelans as well as the gender and kendang—allows for students to explore new techniques and repertoires in their own time that they would not necessarily learn while playing in a gamelan group at home.

27 This foreign observation of Balinese musicians “not seeming to teach” goes back at least to the writings of Colin McPhee (1954). Although instructors will now use notation for some parts and will stop in the middle of teaching to explain others, it is clear that in large part, teaching methods have not changed fundamentally over the last sixty years!
While most of the rehearsals and smaller practices themselves would be taught and learned primarily by direct observation and rote memorization, Lasmawan would not hesitate to answer student questions about the theory behind what the students were learning. Although teaching styles for Balinese gamelan music have traditionally emphasized unquestioning student deference to the teacher regarding the “whys” of playing certain repertoire certain ways (Heimarck 2003), in recent years, conservatory-influenced Balinese pedagogical techniques have included more of an expectation for students to think critically and ask questions about the repertoire that they were learning. Even in traditional Balinese contexts, instruction for foreigners has been an arena in which teachers are willing to compromise with foreign methods of learning and students asking many questions (Bakan 1999: 301-303, McPhee 1966), a practice with which modern students who are primarily from America would be more accustomed.

In either case, Lasmawan—with his long background in learning and teaching at both Indonesian conservatories and in America, and his long-held fascination with gamelan theory stemming from his studies in Java—seemed always eager to give at least basic answers to theoretical questions. When Luke asked about how the kotekan related to the melody of a piece, Lasmawan paused what he was teaching, pulled aside a gangsa, and began to demonstrate how three of the major types of melodic elaboration could be derived from a core melody, how they could be made to transition from one to the other, and in what cases they might be preferred in terms of aesthetic value or ease or performance by a particular group of players. A few weeks
later, after lunch, a few students began an informal discussion about the different types of cyclical drumming patterns and gong cycles. Passing by, Lasmawan stopped to name and elaborate upon some of the more common cycles and their relationships to different repertoires. Eagerly, several students who had been studying kendang together asked to learn some new ones in the few remaining days before they were set to depart. He said something like, “We’ve already worked on bapang, lelonggoran, and gilak. The ones for ‘Legong’ that you want are more complicated—maybe with practice we will learn them next time.”

Some of the questions that I and other students asked were straightforward ones concerning certain rhythmic or melodic lines in relationship to each other within a specific context. However, interestingly, many of the questions could be seen as direct inquiries into a structural aspect that is central to Balinese gamelan music—the flexibility in relating the elaborating parts to the core melody. In asking Lasmawan how he adapted a piece for so many different types of gamelans and different skill levels of groups, he responded,

To adapt a piece from one gamelan to another: play around with the pokok melody, you keep the beat and try to find the gong cycle with a specific note that you think has a good sound. After that, you adjust the technique according to the original piece. To [adjust to] the skill level of the player: You slow the tempo, choose the kotekan technique that is familiar to the individual player: nelu, ngempat, nyodcag or other28 (I Madé Lasmawan, Facebook conversation, February 2013).

Although there are certain ways that audiences are accustomed to hearing a certain piece—for example, with a modern piece like “Cendrawasih,” the locations and types of kotekan that are present in each section were specifically composed as part of the piece, and to some extent are defining characteristics. However, this flexibility in how to elaborate the piece becomes an important pedagogical tool; able to shape the choice of repertoire and each individual piece to the level of each ensemble’s students, Lasmawan could prepare any of the groups to have a respectable performance.

3.4.3 In Performance

It was about an hour before we were supposed to head over to the army temple (Pura Alas Harum) to perform for the odalan. Clouds hung heavy over the mountains, as they had for

28 The Balinese names for different types of different melodic elaborations—nelu, ngempat, and nyodcag—are also known by their more Indonesianized names telu, empat, and nyog cag. These different techniques are discussed in Chapter Four. For more information on this elaborating technique, see Gold 2005: 60-64, Tenzer 2000: 213-214).
several days; it always seemed to rain for temple ceremonies. On the open part of the balé containing the family house, Ketut and the other women were finishing last-minute touches to the girl dancers’ makeup; they had started dressing the children hours before, but it takes hours to apply the correct foundation, eyeliner, mascara, eye shadow, lipstick, and other facial adornments to an entire troupe. Out in the courtyard, the Americans students were still getting dressed. In opposition to the dancers, the female musicians seemed to have it easier, their button-up kebayas and plainly tied kamben (wrap skirts) and sabuk (sashes) much quicker to assemble than the men’s intricately folded kamben and outer layer, the saput. The men also seemed to struggle with their performers’ jackets—all borrowed—and their udeng, cloth hats worn to temple ceremonies that seemed to be traditionally sized too small to fit Western male heads. The women sat on the edges of the balé, trying not to laugh as the young Balinese men clustered around their Western male counterparts, cracking jokes as they refolded and retied the cloths and tried—generally unsuccessfulto find udeng that the men might borrow that would actually fit.

Men from the village, already dressed in their temple clothes, had moved all of the gamelan down the hill and across the village to the temple in trucks—a surprising change for Lasmawan’s American students, who were used to moving all of it themselves by hand from storage space to performance hall. But this was no performance hall where we were going; after a quick clown-car squeeze into one of Lasmawan’s rented vehicles, we all unpacked ourselves in our finery at the temple gates on this cloudy June afternoon, ready to perform.

We waited, sitting on the balé with the gamelan as the rain, finally having arrived, poured around us. We peered out through the gray sheets of rain to the other balés; the village women, having placed their household offerings of fruit under one of the larger balés, had all retreated somewhere drier. The bamboo-leaf decorations on the sides of the stone balés swayed slightly as the heavy water droplets hit them. Then, finally, it stopped, the sun and the activity returned. The vendors serving food once again had long lines, except at the table holding the babi guling (whole roasted pig); most of it had been devoured earlier in the day, by the time that some of us had come to visit the earlier part of the ceremony around lunch time. Now, men returned once more to the gambling tents outside of the temple gates. Some of the male students, plus Lasmawan’s younger sons, went to investigate. His sons, Aji and Adé, got so excited by a game involving large dice with animals on the faces that they insisted upon making a set a few
days later to continue playing in the compound. Other men were proudly preparing their prized roosters for the cockfight. Although most of the fights were held in the small arena outside of the temple proper, one pair of roosters got too excited, and a red one eviscerated a white one inside the middle courtyard of the temple, much to the delight of the red rooster’s owner (and much to the chagrin of a vegetarian among Lasmawan’s students). Women chatted on the balés and children ran everywhere, everyone only stopping when it was time to pray, kneeling in the middle courtyard to receive the rice, holy water, and blessing from the priest.

It was nearly sunset—around seven—but we had been told that we would likely be performing around four. Several of us sought out Lasmawan to ask what was happening. Plans had changed, he said; we’d be playing at night after the women’s group, who would be starting shortly, then eating the traditional rice meal for the village afterwards. We parted ways, most students wanting to observe more of the gambling. I went to watch the women’s group instead, balancing the cup of coffee that someone had handed me in one hand with my video camera in the other. I wanted to see and record their first public performance. Their matching orange kebayas had just arrived from the tailor a few days before; now they wore them proudly as they began to play on Lasmawan’s gong kebyar, which had been moved to the inner courtyard for the occasion.

After their performance concluded, there was a little time before we all headed over to the balé in the outer courtyard where the gamelan angklung, the set that we would be playing, was located. The setup was a bit different from when we had practiced those few days at the compound to revive (or learn for the first time, for some of us) the angklung repertoire that Lasmawan had been teaching the students who came during the first part of the summer. We all clambered out of a closet-like space at the side of the balé offstage where we had been waiting, walked out, and took our seats. Fluorescent lights shining above, we grabbed our pangguls, waiting for the cue to begin our opening piece, an instrumental kebyar. From where I was sitting in the second row of the gangsas, I could see across the narrow stage out into the audience. All of our pieces except for our first featured dancers, the female children of the village; their parents were already crowded around the stage, a few with video cameras or cell phones out, ready to record the event.

And then we were off, the quick tempo of the kotekan seeming even faster under the anticipatory gaze of the villagers than it had been back in the compound. It was going well so
far, I thought, especially considering the different levels of familiarity that the members of the group had with the piece. But then, suddenly, there were feet in front of us, and a short ladder. I looked up. One of the few florescent bulbs hanging in our balé had burned out, and someone had decided that it needed fixing—immediately—in the middle of our performance. Several of the students looked around—was this happening?—but no one else seemed fazed. Soon the handyman had finished the job and we had finished the piece, moving on quickly to the next. The young dancers came out and began to perform, stepping not a foot away from the front instruments on the narrow stage, hanging fabric from the elaborate costumes nearly but never actually catching on the corners of the instruments. We had played with them maybe twice before, and never when they were fully costumed. With the kotekan rushing through my hands and its sound ringing through my ears, I looked past the dancers’ legs and into the audience, where small smiles on the faces of the viewers indicated their approval at their daughters’ work. As the last piece came to a close, everyone dispersed quickly towards the food, letting we the musicians and the dancers go first. There was no applause, but it was a temple ceremony; the music and dance, both an entertainment and an offering. Although only a few of us could speak any Indonesian to chat with those who had just listened to our performance, we had all just briefly become a part of the community.

The students who come to study gamelan with Lasmanwani come for many reasons, most commonly general musical or cultural enrichment, fulfilling specific coursework or school projects, and vacation. Most also have specific goals for themselves as musicians, whether it is to try a new instrument, become a faster player, or simply learn to appreciate the music better. The teachers who come to study, either accompanying students or alone, often have the additional goal of learning pieces to take back and teach others at their gamelans in the United States. Although each individual person in the ensemble has different goals, they must each pursue them within the larger, more immediately practical goal: to prepare repertoire for performance within the village or the neighboring area.

Due to the short cyclical nature of the main Balinese calendar (210 days), the frequency in overlap of auspicious subdivisions of the calendar, the eleven local temples in the area that require yearly ceremonies, and a variety of other religious events that occur yearly within the village, most students who stay for at least three weeks will be present in Bangah for a ritual
event that requires performance. Correspondingly, the temple ceremonies are the primary events for which students perform, along with the other local gamelans. Lasmawan is always quick to emphasize the “connection” and “good feeling” that come with such performances as his American and Balinese communities are able to intersect and the students are able to give their offering of music to the local community.

Fig. 3.5 Lasmawan’s students and community members play processional beleganjur (Author, far left; Photo credit: Patrick Reeves)

For the students, performing in the village often is an occasion for mixed feelings. First is excitement; although most of Lasmawan’s students have worn semi-traditional Balinese garb to perform in the United States, dressing up, seeing the temple decorated, and partaking in the food, gambling, and general clatter of the ceremonies is often overwhelming and exhilarating. For those who have just arrived or are newly learning their part for a performance piece tend to express some anxiety—“What if I mess up?”—because they consider the temple ceremony to be an important event for which they are still musically and culturally unprepared. (While Lasmawan prepares his students the best that he can for the performance, he seems to worry less about musical mistakes made in the temple than in the concert hall; performing one’s best is a more important act of devotion than musical perfection). Confusion is also common among the students; after arriving all together, Lasmawan often will leave the students to take care of business or socialize. The schedule for temple ceremonies generally employs the principle of jam
karet, with no one knowing when performances will happen, or where, until they do happen. 
Finally, although many students are excited when they first arrive at the temple, that excitement 
can turn to boredom. Exploring the structure, eating, and talking to the few other guests who 
speak English only occupies a small part of the time that is frequently spent between arriving and 
performing. Finally, following the performance, many students become exhausted, stimulated 
and overstimulated by the rambunctious atmosphere that is part and parcel of the Balinese temple 
experience.

Often, these different perceptions seem to be combined all at the same time in a 
humorous way, creating memorable learning opportunities for the students. Luke told me about a 
particular topeng (masked dance) performance that they played for in 2011. Although it was 
trying to his patience at the time, he later described as one of his more notable performing 
experiences in Bali:

It [the topeng] was supposed to start at 11 am, I think it actually started at 3 

pm…and then it started, and it lasted maybe five hours or something…it lasted so long…

and it was occasionally punctuated by us jumping into action and playing 
music…And Pak Madé was laughing his ass off the entire time, because it was all 
of this social commentary and comedy in Balinese, but I just had no idea what 
was going on. One of the dancers started falling asleep—until at the very end, the 
dancer put on a Rangda mask, went into a trance, came out and started screaming 
and ripped a head off a chicken, then all the girls woke up. One of them started 
laughing hysterically, one of them started crying. It was…it was an unexpected 
end to an otherwise very slow-paced event (Geaney 2012).

Despite the language barrier between the foreign performers and their Balinese 
audiences, performing at the temples gives the students an opportunity to learn about Balinese 
culture experientially, especially conceptions of time, space, devotion, and aesthetics. 
Additionally, in performing at the temples, the students briefly become part of the local village 
community in a public, meaningful way. In doing so, they also alter local expectations of what a 
temple ceremony is. In this small area of Bali, having foreigners play gamelan and perform 
ngayah at the temples during the summer months is expected. Although Bangah is far in distance 
and mentality from more urban, cosmopolitan corners of the island and has maintained a 
resistance towards changing to accommodating tourists, the village too has become a site of 
transnational musical and cultural exchange.
Furthermore, performing as a part of a different culture’s religious ceremony brings learning opportunities into the mix for the villagers as well as the students as they actually become representatives of the music and culture that they are studying within that community itself. Moreso than many of the village youth, it is the young foreigners who are helping to communally remember traditional Balinese musical culture and preserve its sacred contexts. While the villagers would recognize and perhaps be able to sing the gamelan pieces that they hear performed yearly at their temples, the vast majority of Balinese do not play gamelan or dance, or at least not with any level of regularity or skill. Especially in a village like Bangah, where many of the young potential musicians have left to seek jobs elsewhere, the college-age foreign musicians represent a Balinese musical lineage that as at least as strong as that in the village.

This incorporation of foreigners on a semi-regular basis into the village ceremonies, while not necessarily normative for visitors who travel to Bali to study the arts, is not unusual; both groups whose programs cater to teaching Balinese gamelan to foreigners (such as Gamelan Çudamani) and individual teachers (see accounts in Bakan 1999, Gold 2005) incorporate their foreign students into what are considered to be important social and religious ceremonies. This emphasis on practice as a key to incorporation into social structure is emphasized in Marshall Sahlin’s writings about the encounters between different Pacific island groups and Western explorers (Sahlins 1985: xi), in which the foreigners came to embody certain roles and functions within island society (sometimes to their detriment due to misunderstandings, such as in the case of his central example, Captain Cook). Specifically turning to the Balinese case study, this premise of “correct action” as a path to acceptance has its basis in Balinese Hindu thought, in which “behaving appropriately” in terms of the cosmic and social order is a founding principle (Eiseman 1990: 12).

The situation of the American students participating in Balinese temple ceremonies additionally is predicated upon a different principle than either that of the historical Europeans described by Sahlins (exploration and conquest) or of Tsing’s individual and corporate entities (Tsing 2005) in negotiations over ownership of the Indonesian rainforest. Although other members of the village certainly have their own interpretations and perceptions of the significance of American students playing gamelan in Balinese temples, for Lasmawan and the students, at least one shared goal is to teach and learn, to be open to and share cultural
experiences. Lasmawan’s students may not always remember how to pray correctly and may miss the topeng’s jokes in Balinese, but they do know how to play gamelan. Albeit sometimes in a stumbling fashion, they do speak the local musical language. The music they play may not be their own by birth, but it is by choice, based on a desire to understand a cultural system different from their own and respectfully enter it, if only briefly. These choices, this embodiment of Balinese performing roles by American students not only contributes to central, overall Balinese societal goals, but also allows for a consideration by both foreigners and Balinese as to what is central to enacting Balinese musical culture. In these interactions, the students offer to the Balinese communities not only snippets of Western cultural perspectives, but also new perspectives on Balinese tradition. Although the students have come to learn in Bangah, they have also become some of its culture-bearers.

3.4.4 Cultural Enrichment and Excursions

In many universities in the United States, the course requirements for the university gamelan ensemble indicate that students should learn not only how to play the music, but also something about Indonesian culture. As other authors have noted (Bakan 1999, Gold 2004, Tenzer 2012, among others), much information about Balinese culture can be gleaned from learning to play the music itself—how music and instruments are conceived of and respected, the religious and secular stories that surround Balinese musical and dance genres, and something about Balinese ideas of teaching and learning.

Study abroad programs in general—once only for high school or college students, now part of a growing wave of “edutourism” directed towards learners of all ages—provide the unique opportunity for students to learn a skill, such as language or the performing arts, within the context of a host culture. While students see their learning experiences in Bangah from a variety of standpoints in reference to academic or musical goals, cultural as well as musical immersion is clearly part of the expectations of both students and teachers; why else travel to Bali?

Given that it is his home town, Bangah is a logical place for Lasmawan to bring his students for summer study. However, while familiarity and convenience are certainly important, Lasmawan touts Bangah’s specific attributes as well. Bangah’s location in the mountains makes for a cool, pleasant, quiet place to practice, unlike the sometimes sweltering heat and noisy chaos of more southern locations. Furthermore, many of the other options for group study of Balinese
music and dance are located in or near touristy or urban areas (Ubud and Denpasar) or held on isolated retreats; while there are benefits to staying in each location, Bangah provides students the experience of staying out in a Balinese village and participating in village life. The addition of the women’s gamelan practices ensures that students are interacting with local village musicians to at least some degree almost every day. Finally, because the primary performance opportunities for the students are for events in Bangah or neighboring locations, students are able to play an active role in village life, not only witnessing important ceremonies and events but also taking part in them. By accompanying Indonesian dancers (both children and invited guests) for Indonesian audiences, the students learn how to communicate artistically with local Balinese performing artists as well as appreciate the cultural contexts for performance.

Lasmawan considers the fact that the students are living in the compound itself to be a central part of their Balinese cultural education. Because the compound was built to hold nearly twenty students and a gamelan, it is not precisely the same as living in the household of a regular Balinese family; however, given the necessity to house a number of students at once, the compound still maintains a number of characteristics of Balinese family living. The compound’s layout was based on the traditional structure of Balinese family houses, providing a familiar template for students to learn about the different parts of the house and daily activities, such as giving offerings at the household temple. The student accommodations are built of concrete blocks with no heat, air conditioning, hot water, or often windows of substantial size—elements that are common to traditional Balinese houses. Although linens are provided, they are Indonesian-style (shedding towels and no top sheets). Every meal is provided for the students; however, excluding some breakfasts and the occasional meal prepared specially for a sick student, all of the foods provided are staple Balinese dishes. For those who crave comfort foods from home, packaged goods can be purchased at warungs or tokos up the road; full Western-style meals must wait until the group takes a trip out to a larger town.

In a sense, Lasmawan has already made some compromises towards Western taste and dormitory-style convenience in how his students and guests are housed. Prior to a few years ago, there was no running water to the compound; all of the water was brought up from the river in buckets and had to be heated by hand if hot water was desired. Additionally, since students do not have to procure their own food or wash their own laundry (they can tip hired help to wash and fold the clothes for them), they are not exposed to those daily parts of Balinese life, which
removes time and energy constraints that might keep students from practicing or otherwise enjoying their time in Bangah. While Lasmawan has considered making several other improvements to the compound, namely hot water and internet, these improvements are ones that he considers expensive and relatively unnecessary. With readily-accessible internet, he also worries that students might spend too much time online and not enough time absorbing the music and culture that they are in Bangah to study.

Although staying at the compound itself and following Lasmawan’s routine of intensive practices does in some ways isolate the students from much of the mainstream life of Bangah (musical or otherwise), it also allows Lasmawan to immerse students within the rich cultural as well of musical lore of a Balinese village. One of the highlights of staying at the compound for many of the students is hearing Lasmawan’s stories about the village itself. Many of the stories are in themselves parables about correct behavior in the village. For example, Lasmawan is very conscious of ensuring that his students maintain respectful etiquette, both in general but in particular at religious ceremonies. One morning, I was sitting outside with an English student, Luke. The sun was getting high, and the roosters were crowing, and he began to tell us stories, starting with this story about an American student of his who had attempted to film a Barong and Rangda dance:

When the barong and Rangda came out, her camera was on all the time, she was so excited. [She told me] “I took the concert in Apuan!” you know. But then she pressed play, and just like, two minutes, or maybe one and a half minutes of the Barong fighting Rangda, [she said] “Where’s the picture?” Before and after [the dance] the picture is still there. She cannot believe it, you know. “My camera, my camera’s on, where’s Rangda?” (Lasmawan laughs). It’s very scary (Lasmawan 2012a.)

The masks for the barong and the rangda characters—especially when embodied in dance, and especially with a dance in the context of a religious ceremony, are supposed to contain very powerful and potentially dangerous spirits. It is considered unwise to try to capture their images while the dances are being performed, and only slightly more widely considered acceptable to photograph or film the costumes from the back, or when they are not in use. The power of the masks is something that is considered too dangerous to be caught on film or even looked at lightly. (Even at Colorado College, Lasmawan stores his barong masks with the faces covered).
Other stories of his tell about the presence of different spirits who are believed to exist in the village. These stories also provide reasons for students not to engage in dangerous behavior—for example, staying out late at night. That same morning that he told us about the barong and rangda costumes, he told us several stories about previous encounters that his family and his students had with spirits outside the walls of the compound late at night. He told us:

You need to go home before midnight, because sometimes, sometimes our spirit protects the village. So sometimes at midnight, it will come out, like a snake, at the temple, you know. Many times my sister—she visits me, and after that they go home, like, 11:30, and near the temple, they saw the snake—no head, no tail. The snake is just—ohhhh!—it kept going, kept going, like that. I mean, Balinese people understand actually that’s a protection spirit, you know. And [then it will] suddenly disappear (Lasmawan 2012a.)

He is clear that this warning about encountering spirits late at night, however, does not affect the Balinese in Bangah. Within the context of another story, Lasmawan suggests that it also applies to his American guests:

And one of my friends from Wyoming, I tell her, “Do not go out after midnight,” she likes to meditate, you know, she’s a yoga teacher. [She asks] “Yes—why can’t I go out?” [Lasmawan says] “It’s ok, just listen to me.” And after that, she’s not listening to me, and she goes south of the village to the rice fields, midnight. And after that, she falls down in the creek, and after that, white men help her out from the creek, and then disappear. She just runs, runs! [Luke laughs] She says, ‘I’m sorry, Pak Madé, I’m sorry!’ So you know, that’s, that’s already American people [who are affected by the spirits] (Lasmawan 2012a.)

With the stories come explanations not only of the Balinese spirit world, but how the Balinese engage with these spirits in their daily lives. In addition to performing certain practices—such as not photographing spiritually powerful masks or walking alone at night—the stories explain more tangible practices, such as the shape of Balinese traditional houses. At one point, I had asked Lasmawan about the compound walls. Why did the compounds have the walls, since they were too low to be defensible? Were they only to divide the land? He answered:

Yes, to divide the land. And, you know, the east side of the compound, that’s consider as a garden, so that [the wall around the garden] means that this one is already a human place. So if any spirit—you know, we have a lot of other-other spirit gods, on the river, on the tree, you know, so sometimes they go around, so, we don’t want them going to our place (Lasmawan 2012a.)
Finally, Lasmawan’s stories help contextualize Bangah’s particular self-identity within Bali and Indonesia as a whole as a historical and cultural entity. While in many ways the musical teachings and the overall immersion experience he provides are presented as a *Balinese* cultural experience, not one particular to a certain region or time frame, some of his stories instead reveal a more broad type of self-conceptualization. He tells us:

> You know, in 1965, the communist coup in Bali, in Indonesia, and a lot of Communist Party [members] (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI) got killed, a lot of people got killed, and the government decided that in every village, in every cemetery in Bali, they’re going to burn at least eight to twelve bodies. You know, because so many people got killed?

Bangah was supposed to be eight or twelve, something like that. And the truck had already come to Bangah, you know, at nighttime, around eleven or ten pm. And you on the border of Bangah, in Pacung, before the restaurant, that’s the border. And the truck just turned right, you know? He [the driver] saw the road, he saw—something blocks his eyes or something, because the spirit came. And he turned right—BHHWOOO!—and he went into the small river, you know, just before the *sawah* (rice paddy).

And somebody came, they try to bring the truck back, but the spirit army, they come to help, but they turn the truck back—to the other way! (Away from the village). It’s so scary. And then after that, the army disappeared. The spirit army disappeared. And then after that, then he [the truck driver] reported to the government, “Oh, I don’t want to bring the body to Bangah.” You know, because in Bangah, we don’t have any communists. Why they bring the bodies, the dead bodies to our village? We don’t have any communists. We don’t have communists, and we don’t have dead body of communists (Lasmawan 2012a.)

Although Lasmawan does not regularly lecture about the history of Bangah, Bali, or Indonesia—most of his history lessons are directly related to the development of different musical genres or the interrelationships of different musical styles—stories such as these function on several levels for the students staying at the compound. For those who are approaching Balinese history and culture for the first time, a story such as that might be heard only as a ghost story; however, for those who are more deeply steeped in Balinese history, it provides insight upon how Lasmawan at least interprets the significance and singularity of Bangah within the broader Balinese context.

Outside of Lasmawan’s storytelling and guided experiences of the village temple ceremonies, staying in the village as a form of cultural enrichment depends in large part to what degree students are willing to embrace chances to participate in Balinese daily life (see also
Although free to do so, many students never leave the compound and enter the village except when going with the group for the tour or to perform. This may be due to the language barrier; outside of Lasmawan’s immediate family and a few other teachers and government workers living in the area, few of the villagers know English. Visiting Bali primarily to study music, relatively few of the students learn more than a few words or phrases of Balinese or Indonesian, thus making communication beyond a basic level difficult. However, in addition to the temple ceremonies, which place the students directly within an important part of Bangah village life, there are generally ample opportunities for students to participate in local Balinese cultural life—in and outside Lasmawan’s household and despite the language barrier. Before the temple ceremonies, female students often join the women of the household in constructing the offerings. Additionally, local events, such as family life-cycle ceremonies, are often open to the whole village, including Lasmawan’s students.

There will occasionally be other large performance events in the area that students can attend. For example, in June 2012, one of Bali’s most renowned wayang kulit groups, Cenk Blonk, performed just up the road from Lasmawan’s compound. Younger members of Lasmawan’s family, plus many of the students of the same age, walked up the hill together to take in the performance, which started between nine and ten at night. The screen was set up in an open field, which by the time we arrived was already crowded with locals. Around the fringes stood food and drink stands; despite having several plates of dinner a few hours earlier, many of the students immediately sought out ice cream or popcorn. The performance mixed elements of traditional and modern wayang kulit performance styles—in addition to more traditional characters, the performance contained a motorcycle puppet and jokes about how tourists drive. Such inclusions provided an approachable introduction to wayang kulit, despite the performance being one conducted in Kawi (old Balinese) and Indonesian, and one within a “real” performance setting, i.e. not specifically directed towards foreign audiences. Although only Lasmawan’s Balinese family members stayed for more than the first hour—the foreign students all seemed tired after a long day of practice and time spent following the story in a foreign language—several later mentioned the wayang kulit performance as one of the most fascinating experiences of their trip.

In addition to these cultural experiences inherent in staying in the village, Lasmawan will often bring in guest lecturers or artists to demonstrate other art forms that are practiced in Bali.
While most of the students are there primarily to learn gamelan or dance, the extra enrichment sessions are often part of the curriculum for the college or university courses that Lasmawan co-teaches, although he can arrange for students to study more extensively. One of these artists—I Madé Surata—is a Balinese visual arts polymath who did all of the decorative mural painting and wood and stone carving at the compound, as well as designing and creating sets for Lasmawan for both the gamelans in Bangah and the United States. He is also an adept wayang kulit maker. Bringing the hand tools and materials to perform all of these crafts at the compound, he sets up stations for students to try their hand at each of the different arts. Although students who wish to pursue these art forms further usually do so outside of their time at Lasmawan’s compound, trying a small taste of each of these arts provides students with the opportunity to better understand the visual components of the statues, paintings, carved doors, and puppets that they see throughout their travels in Bali.

On top of the cultural immersion that students receive in the village, the foreigners staying with Lasmawan often experience other parts of Balinese culture through field trips, either as part of their organized student study abroad programs or self-organized groups. Because Bangah is located in the center of Bali, the students can travel in groups easily to almost any location on the island in under ninety minutes of travel time—perfect for cultural excursions. Lasmawan usually arranges transportation with his nephews, Daya and Dema, to drive the rented vans. Some of the trips—to the hot springs, the monkey forest, to go snorkling—are purely recreational, designed to allow students to relax and see the sites of Bali while they are there. Others, such as those to famous religious sites—the temples at Besakih and Tanah Lot, for example—show students important landmarks how the larger temples look and function.

Areas like Tanah Lot, for example, are extremely touristy; for students who arrive and come directly from the airport to Bangah, the atmosphere can be surprising. Tanah Lot at least contains the temple among the hundreds of small gift shops that have sprung up around it in recent years; some of the destinations that students seek out, like the beach strip at Kuta, contain very little that is originally Balinese.

Lasmawan also incorporates trips to Ubud as a common part of the itineraries for students studying at the compound. In some part, this is to give students a mini-vacation; as Elizabeth Macy recalls having once been a student on such a trip, “Upon our arrival in Ubud, we
all welcomed the Western conveniences, familiar food (bread!), and prevalent shopping” (Macy 2010: 50). However, it is an opportunity for the students to see how the Balinese performing arts are presented to the casual visitor—in standardized, abbreviated forms, outside of their cultural context. She highlights these differences and also Lasmawan’s reactions to them: primarily concern for the disconnection between tourist culture and the daily culture of the Balinese.

Of the different cultural excursions that Lasmawan’s students take outside of the compound every summer, perhaps the most consistent ones are to watch performances at the Bali Arts Festival in Denpasar, about an hour’s drive south of Bangah depending on the traffic. Nearly every day of the month-long festival features performances in traditional, avant garde, and fusion music and theatrical styles from across Bali and often includes guest performers in different traditional Indonesian genres across Indonesia and around the world. Although there are usually non-Balinese attendees, the festival was created with a Balinese audience in mind and the vast majority of attendees are from Bali (Yamashita 2003). With performances conducted on several large stages and several smaller pavilions that are surrounded by vendors selling local foods and goods, there are almost always a number of events happening.

Perhaps the most consistently spectacular of the yearly events at the Bali Arts Festival is the opening parade, an event that Lasmawan often aims specifically to have his students attend. Held in the streets of Denpasar on the opening Saturday of the festival, the parade is host to dozens of different performing groups that march, dance, and ride on floats through the streets. Each kabupaten is represented with a float and walkers in the streets, often exhibiting regional dresses and musical genres rather than the more standardized forms that the musicians will display later in the inter-kabupaten, competition-style performances. Traditional gamelan and brass bands from the local schools will perform as well as private dance organizations. Sometimes the Bali Zoo will even bring out elephants for the event, which are only dwarfed in size by the large, elaborate floats whose elements draw on mythological Hindu elements.

In 2012 the parade was held on the wide streets near Monumen Bajra Sandhi, a large stone monument-museum that is located in the middle of a large recreational park in the heart of Denpasar. Of the family, Lasmawan alone came down with his two van-fulls of students currently staying at the compound—some students from UMT, the younger members of Tunas Mekar, and a few individuals staying at the compound of the time. Upon arriving in Denpasar, we hiked several miles to the parade route—Lasmawan had originally told his nephews to drop
everyone off near Sanur, where the parade had been held the year before—so the group from Bangah reached the park sweaty and tired; Lasmawan had even had us stop so that he could procure a handkerchief to combat sweat from the relative hot humidity of Denpasar.

For students who had only ever come to Bangah within Bali, seeing Denpasar, with its three-story buildings, wide paved roads, countless shops, graffiti, and throngs of Balinese from all over the island, was quite a different sight. Bajra Sandhi itself—possibly the largest manicured green space in Bali—was among these wonders. The fields at the park, normally filled in the afternoons with children and adults practicing club sports, were instead crowded with vendors and picnicking families. Some of the students, eager to practice their newly-learned food and drink words in Indonesian, went over to talk to the vendors and buy drinks (twice the price if it was cold) and roasted corn. Thousands of spectators crowded the edges of the streets, all craning to get a good view. Some adventurous souls had climbed into trees, onto pillars, and on top of the walls of nearby businesses to see.

Lasmawan herded everyone to a curb near the beginning of the parade route, telling everyone to “meet back here” when the parade was over. That task was more difficult than expected. At the start of the parade, the crowd surged towards the floats, allowing just enough room between spectators and spectacle for no one to get completely crushed. After the initial float went by, the planned parade route was changed mid-parade, leaving hundreds of people around us who had staked out “the best spot” to rush over to the other side of the intersection. Some foreigners but mostly Indonesian viewers were trying to hold still and video cameras, cell phones, and tablet computers above their heads to record the passing performers. We jostled in the crowd to see, feeling lucky that most of us were taller than at least half of the rest of the crowd. Quickly separated from each other in the rush of people and performers, overwhelmed by the crash of beleganjur and the dissonant “paired tunings” of the brass bands, we only re-oriented ourselves by spotting the tallest of our group members by his standout height. Any questions or conversations that we would have with Lasmawan about the different performers had to wait until later that night or the next day.
In addition to coming to Denpasar for the parade, Lasmawan will also bring his students to the festival for some of the larger inter-kabupaten competitions or ones that he thinks might be interesting. As noted above, his students have not performed in the Bali Arts Festival since 1996; however, he considers the atmosphere and the experience to be important for students in expanding their experiential knowledge of the Balinese performing arts. Although traveling to the Bali Arts Festival is not a part of the village life that Lasmawan so carefully cultivates for his visitors, it does represent a foray into seeing the wider world of Bali.

3.4.5 Financial Concerns

One morning over my breakfast tea in Bangah, I was discussing my research with one of Lasmawan’s students, an ethnomusicologist who has studied and worked with him for over ten years. We were chatting about various subjects when she said, bluntly, “You know, no one pays the same amount to stay here.” I sipped thoughtfully on my tea as she continued to speak, suggesting that among the many issues that I needed to address was that of money, something that I had skirted in talking about my studies out of a sense of the topic seeming impolite. She was right; the financial implications of Balinese arts instruction to foreigners—truly a form of
— are central to maintaining arts education as a viable activity for Balinese performing artists.

In discussions about monetary payment, my being too *malu*—shy or ashamed—to discuss the topic is not uncommon in a Balinese societal context. In traditional Balinese social systems, a student-teacher relationship would be a longterm one, built on the continued reciprocal exchange of services, gifts, and mutual aid on which it would be difficult to place any monetary value (Eiseman 1990). However, the nature Balinese artists teaching foreign students—many of whom are a more temporary part of a teacher’s life rather than a permanent part of the social ecosystem—makes the question of an equitable exchange a difficult one. Monetary exchange, traditionally seen as less tasteful than exchanging other forms of capital, must enter the equation, either as the sole or primary expected form of payment.

Different Balinese arts teachers and organizations tend to handle these issues differently, based on what is included in the program (continuous or individual lessons, just lessons or also food and housing), the number of students, the instructors’ personal relationships with the students, and their own personal preferences. Organizations that host intensive programs with set dates and activities, such as Flower Mountain and Sanggar Çudamani, tend to charge a program fee for that set period of time that includes all planned activities. Catering to a large group of individuals from different backgrounds, this system ensures that the instructors and guest speakers or artists are paid equitably for their time. Some groups that arrange primarily private lessons, such as Gamelan Mekar Bhuana, also follow this model. Other organizations—such as the ISI-sponsored Bali Module for the World—cater to both individuals and groups according to the foreign students’ visiting schedule; although there is often a set price per week of lessons, the amount of practice and schedule varies depending on student-teacher agreement, thus including a variable by which students and teachers can modify a purely monetary agreement to one that is also social.

Individuals who teach lessons to individual or small groups of students can often afford to be more flexible. Some artists who teach lessons may contract through a larger organization and charge a per-lesson rate that is the same for all private lessons contracted through the group. A teacher may set a price for a certain number of lessons that may change between students, based on the strength of the social relationship or the precise type of study that the student desires. Some teachers expect monetary payment of an appropriate, respectful sum that is left for
the student to determine. Finally, some instructors who have longterm, strong relationships with their students maintain a variation on the traditional model of exchange that may include some monetary payment but also reciprocal favors.

Lasmawan’s own position as a teacher encompasses many of the different student-teacher relationships mentioned above, in large part because the way he constructs his summer study opportunities for students is so broad. Correspondingly, his methods of obtaining compensation for his and his family’s work encompasses many of the methods named above; “no one pays the same amount” because each group or student is staying for a different length of time, is engaging a certain amount of his and his family’s resources and time, and has a different type of relationship with Lasmawan and the family outside of strict monetary interactions. For example, the groups of students from large academic organizations each pay a set sum that is charged as tuition at the college or university; Lasmawan is then paid his amount as an established salary from the organization. Smaller groups of students or individuals who have little prior relationship to Lasmawan’s family or his American gamelans may pay an amount that he and the student determine beforehand, but that may change the next time that person comes to Bali, depending on their changing strength of relationship. Longterm students who have become sufficiently connected to the family personally or professionally, especially those who are just dropping in for a few days or a week, may agree with Lasmawan just to give a little bit to cover food and lodging expenses.

Although Lasmawan’s relationships with those who study with him often encompass both social and financial exchange, the two must be interlinked so that they are beneficial to his family, to the students, and to his broader Bangah-based and gamelan-based communities. Lasmawan notes:

I kind of, you know, have been blessed by the god. I quit my job in Java, and that was a big thing, but at this time, you know, I am able to buy gamelans, I am able to build this house—it’s not corruption! But it’s helped by your friends. Like you, like Luke, like the other Liz—whoever comes here, actually, helps my community here. The money you give me I either spend here fixing the house, paying the cook, you know, just this kind of, meaning—I would rather ask than pursue corruption…I go home [to Bali]. I also help the family and help the community. When this house done, we will not ask a lot of money—just to pay the food, you know (Lasmawan 2012b.)
He is concerned, however, about what some of the other individuals and groups in Bali charge students for lessons; there is a difference, he says, between doing business and making a large profit. At one point, he repeated a Balinese-language pun that he had heard on a major instructional groups’ name—that their practices were like shaking a tree for coconuts, except instead of coconuts it was foreigner’s money that they were seeking. He has less respect for some of the others practicing this trade after hearing stories from several students who had previously studied with others in Bali; they had reported that once the paid lessons were over, the interpersonal relationships ceased; as Lasmawan noted, “the teacher wouldn’t even talk to him [the student] on the street.” For himself, Lasmawan aims for the students to become like family, to be welcome at any time, whether or not they are paying him for lessons.

3.4.6 Foreigners’ Impact on Bangah

Although foreign students descend on Bangah every summer for two months, there is little permanent evidence of their annual presence in the village. The aforementioned Edmundo Luna, a linguist researching Balinese language who has come to Bangah a number of times during his visits over the last twenty years, reports that “nothing much has changed” in Bangah since he started coming, related to Lasmawan’s students or otherwise. Unlike the tourist center Ubud, which had exponentially multiplied its yoga facilities, ice cream parlors, and Dolce and Gabbana outlets between my first visit in 2010 and my last in 2012, Bangah shows almost no sign of any outside influence. The largest shop in the village is probably the van-sized convenience store located near the intersection with the main road that sells Coca-Cola and snacks to a primarily local audience; for a restaurant meal, procuring a cell phone, or buying toiletries, one has to head either to Baturiti or Tabanan.

Bangah has not changed much to accommodate these annual guests; it has, however, benefitted from the costs associated with their stay. Although the women of the household do much of the cooking and cleaning when they are not teaching dance or filling in parts on gamelan rehearsals, Lasmawan still hires a small staff to ensure that the compound stays clean and that all of the large meals are prepared on time. The extra expenditure can be traced to the local markets; while all of the foreign guests eat traditional Balinese dishes, the quantities that they consume—especially of meat and fruit—are beyond what many Balinese could afford on a daily basis. Lasmawan must hire vans and drivers to transport the students, as well as pay to bring in the outside instructors. And since he makes improvements to the structures on the
compound on almost a yearly basis, he engages local building crews who might otherwise not have work. In addition to improving his own properties, Lasmawan additionally is active with the local temples, and some of his financial gain from teaching the students goes directly into maintaining village religious life.

In addition to the economic impact of Lasmawan’s foreign students, there is also a social and cultural impact. Since teaching students means that Lasmawan is able to return home to the village every year, this allows him and Ketut to support local arts culture in the village by providing a location and lessons for the village women in gamelan and the village girls in dance. With little tourism in the area, villagers who otherwise might not be exposed to foreigners often come to interact with them as much as language allows in the context of normal social events, such as temple ceremonies, rather than engaging only in economic transactions.

Talking to the foreign students provides free language practice for those in the village who do speak some English—mostly younger people, teachers, or government workers—as students and villagers can switch between their few learned phrases in English and Balinese or Indonesian. At a baby’s forty-two day ceremony, I talked with a local teacher who was from Bangah but taught in a neighboring village. We discussed many of the issues facing modern Bali—particularly political corruption and environmental damage—switching between Indonesian and English to best convey our points. Although he was worried about tourism as a whole, the teacher was glad to see foreign students come up to study in the rural areas. He was certain that we could improve problems not only in Bali but in America as well if we all (foreigners and the Balinese) cared and worked together (bekerja bersama, semua). Performing gamelan music constituted one part of this working together; representation of Bali abroad, even if by non-Balinese musicians, could increase awareness about the island and its culture.

3.5 Lasmawan: Maintaining International Community Ties

Lasmawan’s foreign students forge friendships with the villagers in Bangah—particularly the younger ones, or those who actively play with the gamelan—relationships that are maintained both through social media such as Facebook and that are revived in person if the students are able to return. However, while Bali becomes a study vacation for most of the students who come there, for Lasmawan, it is one of two homes that are inextricably tied together by familial and community obligations.
Lasmawan has returned to his home in Bangah almost every year since moving to the United States, excluding a few years in the early 1990s. Although Colorado has become his primary residence, a central nexus from which his connections to other gamelan communities stem, Bangah is still the location of his family house. The concept of one’s family house as opposed to one’s primary residence functioning as a familial home is very important in traditional Balinese culture. Within the traditional patrilineal Balinese social structure, the male head of a family lives in the main family house; the sons and their wives (who move to live with the husband’s side of the family) traditionally live in balé that are within or adjacent to the main house complex. More recently, as sons move away from home to pursue work outside of their own villages, the family home in the village remains the place to which all family members return to celebrate religious holidays.

Branches of the family tree become separated at least symbolically when a son builds a household that has a completed temple within its walls. Each Balinese dwelling at least contains plangkiran that hangs on the walls on the northeast side of the buildings. Ideally, dwellings that house a whole family also have a family temple with a number of different shrines dedicated to the different deities and ancestors. However, a family temple must go through several stages before it is considered to be complete. Lasmawan explained to me that the temples must be rebuilt several times of increasingly sturdy materials. Stone, the last of the materials and the one which will not degrade, represents the family’s establishment and commitment to that place. Over the years, Lasmawan has helped improve the temple in the family house in Bangah—one of his central family duties and a costly process, as each improvement requires rebuilding the entire courtyard space. Finally, in the summer of 2013, he oversaw the paving of the temple courtyard with stone mosaics. By returning to help complete this part of the family temple, Lasmawan has maintained his familial ties to Bangah. I asked him once if he had thought about building a full family temple in Colorado Springs, establishing the American branch of his family. Lasmawan said no—but if, as I suggested, Putu or another of his sons would want to, then they would have to build the whole temple correctly, from scratch.

In addition to maintaining the family house and his new compound, when Lasmawan returns he also checks on the properties that he owns—mostly fields that are cultivated and left fallow in turn, watched over by his relatives when he is away. In addition to performing service to his family temple, he also performs service to the village temples for the temple ceremonies
and donates to the temple funds for their upkeep. Although he primarily maintains musical ties to Bangah through the groups that he hosts at the sanggar, the summer visits also provide time for him to travel to the weddings, funerals, and other major events of his Balinese friends and colleagues, both from studying at STSI and from working in the United States.

While in the United States, Lasmawan maintains these connections to his family and Balinese community primarily through the telephone and social media. However, he maintains that he still has more metaphysical connections to Bangah. Once, he told me about an eerie moment that he had a few years back while in Colorado. He said:

Do you remember the priest, in Bangah, with the long hair? He’s very often to come here to help us with the ceremony. He passed away, uh, like six months ago. It’s funny, you know, because when he passed away, suddenly, the day before he passed away, in my house in Colorado Spring, there’s a big…he’s not a crow…so like a big bird, what do you call that…”whoh, whoh!” that sounds like that, you know [an owl]. It just stood, on my house, it just stood there. I didn’t see it until my neighbor [said], “Madé, you have a big bird on your house.” Just almost, um, as big as a dog, just stand there, just like that, you know.

But I know, usually in Bangah, you know, if you see a bird like that, the next day there is going to be somebody who passes away. And after that—that’s like, 5 pm in Colorado—when the bird saw me look at it, and it’s gone. [Lasmawan makes a noise.] And the next night I had a dream that somebody cut my hair—but in the dream, my hair is long! And suddenly I remember, the only one that has long hair in Bangah is the priest, you know? And suddenly, the next morning, one of the priests in Bangah passed away (Lasmawan 2012a.)

I asked him, “And the owl knew to find you all the way in Colorado?” He said, “Oh yes. Bali, America, it doesn’t make a difference.” Despite being thousands of miles away, Lasmawan considered the Balinese spirits to still be at work in his life, illustrating a connection between him and Bali, him and Bangah.

While many of Lasmawan’s interests in Bali are associated either with maintaining familial and communal relationships or working to educate his foreign and local students, Lasmawan also talks about other projects that he wants to do in the village. At the same time that he purchased the land on which the sanggar is built, Lasmawan bought a large parcel of land behind the sanggar wall—a sharply sloping piece, currently covered in woods and fields, that extends down to the river.

One morning after breakfast he came up to me as I was hanging out my towel on a rack near the back wall of the compound. We started talking and he took me to look over the back
wall to look. The sun was climbing into the sky, beginning to remove the chill from the air and causing the valley to glow a verdant green. He said,

Do you see that, down there? Yes, I want to make it a golf course. Do you golf? [I replied no.] I love to golf, but it is so expensive here, all the courses down at Kuta—maybe just for the rich businessmen from Japan…I’ve been thinking, I want to build a golf course down there, build nice rooms—with air conditioning and internet—and then have the businessmen come play here. And they’ll pay big money, and then the students who stay here, maybe the students can study for free (Lasmawan 2012c.)

I asked him if it would change Bangah to put a course down there. “Maybe,” he said. But he smiled as he gazed at the valley, no doubt seeing the golf course below that might support both his favorite sport and his gamelan community. Sanggar Manik Galih—it was a blessed seed, ready and waiting to grow into something that could nourish the entire community, both in Bali and abroad.
CHAPTER FOUR

LEARNING AND TEACHING “SUMIAR”

At Lasmawan’s musicians’ compound, there was one piece that was played that summer of 2012 more than any other: “Sumiar.” One of his compositions, it was written originally for Colorado College’s gamelan ensemble, Gamelan Tujung Sari, in 2003. It was initially composed for the four-note slendro-scale Balinese gamelan angklung, but the piece has since been adapted for the seven-note pelog-scale Balinese gamelan semaradana and the five-note pelog-scale gamelan gong kebyar, upon which it was being played that summer in Bangah. During the day, the mixed foreign-local group would practice one version of the piece, made more complicated through more elaborate kotekan, reyongan (interlocking patterns on the reyong), and drum patterns; every night, the local women’s group would practice a simplified version, playing more slowly with previously-interlocking parts performed in unison to fit the skill level of this brand-new group of musicians. It became the ubiquitous soundtrack to the compound that summer, one of two pieces that were shared by all of Lasmawan’s groups.

While the energetic sound of the piece is certainly pleasant, that flexibility of “Sumiar” as a composition is perhaps its most notable aspect. Traditional or kreasi baru compositions can be adapted to the skill level of its performers by adapting the tempo or the interlocking of the elaborating parts over the same pokok, or core melody; however, there are set tempos and types of kotekan associated with particular pieces. Additionally, kebyar-style pieces, of which “Sumiar” is one, belong to a genre developed at the beginning of the twentieth century to showcase the virtuosity of competing instrumental sections within the ensemble.\footnote{For a complete history and analysis of gamelan gong kebyar and the development of the kebyar style, see Michael Tenzer’s \textit{Gamelan Gong Kebyar} (2000).} Even with simplified parts, the amount of ensemble communication and blistering speed necessary to play the kebyar style idiomatically make it a difficult genre for casual and especially foreign musicians playing Balinese gamelans.

“Sumiar” is much simpler to adapt than many other compositions due to its short, repeated melodic motives consisting of “textbook” examples of kotekan, thus making it a good
piece to teach both technique and the ensemble communication patterns of kebyar style to beginning players.

The piece begins with a short kebyar section which highlights the virtuosity of the gangsa and reyong sections, respectively, through a unison ugal/gangsa opening figure that is answered with a response in the reyong featuring first simple reyongan, then an elaborated ascending melody figure, which is probably the most technically difficult part of the composition. It is followed by a response in the gangsa section, lead by the ugal.

Fig. 4.1: “Sumiar,” opening kebyar in the gangsa and reyong

30 The form of notation that I use above blends Western notation and cipher notation to show both the numbered pitches of the keys being played and the relative rhythms of the musical lines. Although I use “C” as equivalent to “1,” all gamelans have slightly different tunings, and thus the piece may fall on different pitches on different sets.
This metrical but formally-unmetered section relies on intercommunication between the section players, as each player must work with the others to maintain the tempo and, in the case of the reyong, evenly-subdivided interlocking.

The next section establishes the eight-beat pokok (core melody) over the lively bapang lelonggaran colotomic cycle (cycle in which different instruments “mark off” nested time intervals), a common foundational choice in modern kebyar repertoire:

![Figure 4.2: “Sumiar,” pokok and gong cycle](image)

G = gong, P = kempur, M = kemong (all gong types)

The core melody and gong cycle is then submerged beneath a call-and-response section between the gangsas and reyong. Each opens with an idiomatic sixteen-beat figure, then proceeds into a distinct, basic, two-beat motive of kotekan or reyongan that is repeated in sets of fours on top of the core melody.

![Figure 4.3: “Sumiar,” kotekan motive (kilitan telu)](image)

Although Lasmawan primarily taught everyone the same kotekan at the compound, a kotekan telu (a pattern built from three notes where the two interlocking parts share a central pitch), because the elaboration is so short, other patterns could easily be substituted instead, including kotekan empat (a pattern built from four notes where the two interlocking parts do not share a central pitch), or more simply, played without kotekan. Variation in this section is achieved
through use of terrace dynamics accompanying each melodic cycle; the number of iterations can be pre-determined, or set by cues between the kendang player and the remainder of the gamelan.

After a final reyong flourish and a moment of silence, the piece continues into a *gegambangan* section, based on a rhythmic pattern that was adapted into *gong kebyar* pieces from the older, courtly *gong gedé* repertoire. Lively, and with a triple feel, this section is lighter on the kotekan and reyongan, instead focusing on unison and figures in the gangsas harmonized in empat (both parts move in parallel motion, four notes apart). The more percussive *byar* chords (reyong players strike a chord each using the outer two of the three notes before each player) and *ocak-ocakan* (pitchless clanging of mallets against the pots) in the reyong presenting a stronger, more unified sound. Instead of appearing in two-beat cells, the elaborated melody spans to 32 beats, thus encompassing four total gong cycles. In this gegambangan section, terrace dynamics again provide the primary method of creating differentiation and excitement within the piece, and once again can be pre-set in number or rely on the drummers’ cues to complete the piece.

Relatively short, simple in form, and containing straightforward interlocking parts, “Sumiar” still embodies major formal sections of the kebyar genre as well as the techniques and types of melodic elaboration central to playing in the kebyar style. Additionally, it challenges those musicians in leadership roles, especially the ugal player, to give clear cues, establish proper tempos both with and without the kendang, and communicate changes of dynamics and the switches between formal sections. Although it is possible to notate the elaborating parts to the piece, as I have above, Lasmawan rarely notates such elaborations, instead teaching them by rote. The only notation that he gives is cipher notation for the core melody players, which only indicated their notes and where the *gong agung* (largest gong that plays on the first/last note of the cycle) hits:

![Cipher notation for “Sumiar”](image)

**Fig. 4.4 Cipher notation for “Sumiar”**
“Sumiar” was the first piece that I played on the compound in summer 2012. Five minutes after dropping off my bags from the hour-long car trip from Sanur, I was drawn outside by the sounds of the afternoon rehearsal of students from Montana, on the balé adjacent to the guest quarters. They were taking a break from playing the gamelan angklung—the type of gamelan that they had at home—to play a bit on the gong kebyar. This was the first or second day that they were working on kebyar repertoire, and Lasmawan had placed each of the students on an instrument that they would find challenging, primarily either the polos or sangsih gangsā parts. Knowing that I played in the gamelan at Florida State and briefly having seen me play the summer before, he moved his son Adé elsewhere and placed me on the ugal—a difficult place from which to learn when one is simultaneously supposed to lead!

Over the next few weeks, the shifting mix of Balinese and non-Balinese musicians who constituted the “foreign” group at the compound would practice the piece for about half an hour each day. The reyong parts—most technically difficult and with technique the most foreign from the other keyed instruments—were usually played by his two sons. His wife would usually play the gong cycle; as it was not a dance piece, she would not be needed to work with her local dance students to dance it. The pokok instruments would generally be played by Balinese villagers who dropped by from time to time to play, foreign students and friends of Lasmawan’s who were just passing by for a few days, or less-advanced students from the American universities. The gangsā parts were divided among his American students and other, more permanent foreign students, which gave them either the opportunity to become proficient at playing the mostly on-beat polos parts or increase their skill level by playing the mostly off-beat sangsih part, which is generally considered to be harder. I played the ugal part throughout, while Lasmawan and the American professor leading the Missoula group, Robert Ledbetter, led on kendang during the time that the Montana group was present.

During the first few rehearsals of “Sumiar,” the foreign group focused on memorizing the few distinct parts of the work. Lasmawan taught the piece mostly in order, adding on a new part as soon as it became clear that the players could recall the materials to some degree. We learned the introduction and the first, call-and-response section first. The easier, repeating gegambangan section came last. This whole learning process, the initial acquisition of the materials, took fewer than three rehearsals of an hour each. When the piece was complete, the group repeated the call-
and-response section a number of times in a row, reinforcing the kotekan parts and practicing the dynamics and the transitional cues between kendang, ugal, and the larger ensemble. Right before the performances at the village temples, the group would switch to simply playing the piece straight through, stopping only to fix cues and communication between the sections.

In contrast, the rehearsals for the village women’s group were organized somewhat differently. Just before seven every night, right after dinner and the sun had set, the women of the village came to the compound, riding one or two at a time through the front gate on their family mopeds. “Sumiar” was one of the two pieces that the women were learning that summer, the other being the kebyar classic “Tabuh Telu Kembang Kuning,” which had originated from the gong gedé repertoire. Unlike the foreign group, which contained a variable numbers of players depending on who was in town, the women’s group filled up every instrument on the stage. Most of the women were mothers in the thirties or forties; the eldest had played as young women in the original village women’s gamelan group which had been disbanded almost twenty years before. The instrument assignments were not as clear-cut as with the foreign group, although each section generally consisted of a mix of rhythmically stronger and rhythmically weaker individuals, and the harder parts—most notably kendang—were given to women who had played before or were from musician-families. Lasmawan’s sister, Ni Nyoman Pinti, is one of the kendang players. Strong and sure in her part, Pinti would often also look out towards the group, pointedly trying to get wayward musicians to follow her lead.

The women’s rehearsals were substantially different in character than those of the foreigners’. The pieces they played were limited to these two during the time that I was present at the compound, working them over a period of over a month. They would play simplified versions of each part, repeating each section a number of times slowly while Lasmawan and a male assistant instructor from the village (I Wayan Bukit) would walk between the rows and attempt to fix incorrect rhythms or playing technique. When one of the male leaders deemed that everything seemed correct, the group would move on to the next section. After a few weeks, the number of repetitions became shorter and the women came to play the piece through in its entirety, ready to play for the temple ceremony.

While they still learned by rote, the women received more individual attention in many cases than the foreigners, as Bukit individually corrected each player. This activity is not limited to teaching women’s gamelans; in my study with Gamelan Çudamani, there were almost as
many teaching aids as students, and each would sit and play the parts from the opposite side of
the instruments with each student until the student remembered the parts. However, the overall
slower pace for learning was quite different from the overwhelming, breakneck pace at which the
foreign students were expected to learn new material. The atmosphere of the rehearsals was also
different. Before, after, and between pieces, the women laughed and gossiped, drinking tea and
eating sumping (traditional rice-cakes wrapped in banana leaves) during a regular break in the
middle of rehearsal. This behavior would also be typical of male Balinese musicians, except the
men would also be smoking. However, the more relaxed attitude also continued into the
rehearsal itself to some degree; many of the women would seemingly “space out” during the
many repetitions of each musical section, causing even more repetition to be necessary.

The difference in pedagogy highlights a difference in Balinese perceptions between
players’ abilities based on gender and nationality. Women have been taught gamelan in the
Balinese conservatories as far back as the 1960s and women’s gamelan groups have become
increasingly popular throughout the last twenty years. Many Balinese musicians and community
members are extremely supportive of female musicians; however, for the most part, their skill is
not considered to be equal to that of the men (Bakan 1998b and 1999, Downing 2008 and 2012,
Susilo 2003, Willner 1996). In my own experience watching women’s groups at the Bali Arts
Festival, women typically perform less challenging pieces than men, often with unified hand and
mallet gestures mixed in where musical flourishes might otherwise be. Even when girls and
women are coached as music equals—as Sonja Lynn Downing documents in her work with the
girls’ group run by Gamelan Çudamani—the commentators for women’s performances still
often only focus on how beautiful the women look, not the quality of their performance
(Downing 2008, 2013). In principle, most male Balinese artists have come a long way in their
attitudes since the 1990s—the era when ISI professor I Wayan Dibia said of the quintessentially
masculine beleganjur genre, “For me, watching a woman play that music is like watching a
beautiful woman driving a big truck” (Dibia in Bakan 1999: 21)—yet some traces of such
perceptions remain.

While there are certain stereotypes about non-Balinese gamelan players—they are a
novelty, as much if now not more than their female Balinese gamelan-playing counterparts—as
Lasmawan’s American gamelan students, it was assumed that we already had a firm grasp on at
least some technical aspects of gamelan music, if not the long-term immersive knowledge that
would come from living in a Balinese village. The style in which we were taught—being expected to gradually pick up the part, almost full-tempo, from watching players who knew the piece—mirrors the maguru panggul learning process for Balinese men’s groups as described by Bakan, among others.

Lasmawan explains this difference in the parts that he gave to the women:

The strategy of teaching is you have to see how is the quality of your students. If they’re good, you can do the kebyar, but this one is good for the beginning. I think it’s good for the women, you know? If I give them the kotekan, they’re not going to be able to do it, you know. But now, if they sound like that it is ok, you know? The quality [of their playing] now is gong gedé [a slower, older gamelan genre], you know, not kebyar (Lasmawan 2012a.)

Although Lasmawan bases his evaluation on what his different groups should perform based on skill level—the women, as new players, would not be expected to learn parts that are as difficult at the beginning or to be able to learn them as quickly. Yet, American players who had no more than a semester’s experience on gamelan (or similarly, no experience with a piece) would be expected to learn it within a few days while studying in Bali, if not learn it quite to the same degree of perfection.

As I talked to the women, it became clear most of them had no expectations about becoming fantastic gamelan players, nor was there even the sense that they could—the expectations of both instructors and student players was that the group would learn slowly but steadily. They were beginners doing this as a hobby now that the kids were old enough to be left at home; the Americans—even the American women—were the fast learners, the experienced players by comparison. They did not seem embarrassed to play, as eminent Balinese composer I Ketut Suandita reported of his young female students in the 1990s (Suandita in Bakan 1999: 269). Their goals reflected the aesthetic tastes that Lasmawan had described as characteristic of Bangah—steady, without too much elaboration, for the purpose of service to the community.

Still, the results of the women’s efforts were impressive. On the first day of the odalan, the women were the first performers to start on the stage in the jaba tengah, the middle portion of the temple that in addition to one of the several gamelans present also contained the balé of offerings, and whose courtyard was where everyone had prayed earlier. It was just after dark when they began, naked compact fluorescent bulbs hanging from the balé ceiling casting a yellow-green glow onto the women’s white kebayas and their matching batik skirts. With a p**ak**
on the kendang, the drummer signaled the group to start, the sounds of the piece carrying throughout the temple where the other villagers, plus Lasmawan’s American students, were eating and socializing.

The rendition was not perfect. But as the piece continued, people continued to gather around to watch, perched on the edges of other balé. Although their audience which ebbed and flowed represented the whole village, the most attentive watchers were the grandmothers and the children—the older women watching their daughters take an opportunity that they had never had, the children, eyes shining with delight at seeing their mothers in this new context, clambered on to the edge of the stage to be closer to the music. While speed is a highly valued attribute of gamelan gong kebyar repertoire, what makes “Sumiar” impressive is the combination of technical precision and energy. The members of the Bangah women’s group, smiling as they played and laughing at their own small mistakes, brought high energy to the piece despite their novice player ability.

Given the piece’s energetic sound and adaptability to be played by individuals of varying levels of skill and experience, “Sumiar” was a logical choice for me to program for the Florida State University Balinese gamelan, Sekaa Gong Hanuman Agung, during my stint as artistic director in the spring of 2013. Having assigned parts based on the students’ prior experience and
skill for our large semesterly dance piece, “Cendrawasih,” for “Sumiar” I allowed the students to choose the instruments that they would play, suggesting ones that would stretch each student’s musical experience and capabilities. Hannah Davis, an experienced gamelan player who had played both previously with the FSU gamelan and the gamelan jegog (gamelan constructed of bamboo) at Gamelan Sekar Jaya, moved from her usual position on gangsa to leading the group on ugal. Four students who had previously played structural or rhythmic parts—jegogan, ceng-ceng, gong—learned to play the gangsa parts. Although for some players the new challenges appeared to be nearly beyond their abilities, they all worked hard, some simplifying the parts as necessary to play together.

I found that my own teaching style fell between that of Lasmawan’s approaches to teaching the two groups in Bali. Teaching this piece primarily by rote and by ear instead of using the cipher notation scores that I had previously employed for more complex pieces allowed for us to focus more on ensemble communication, especially between the ugal, the drums, and the gangsa section. The remainder of the gangsa section, few of whom had played the instrument before, needed the type of rote repetition that the women’s group had; I separated them into a closet room for sectionals where they played each interlocking pattern until they were truly interlocking together. While I was teaching them, they were teaching me, and illuminating how and why Lasmawan made the pedagogical choices that he had for each group.

Although Sekaa Gong Hanuman Agung played the piece well, a mixed group of first-semester and more experienced players could not match the performance level of the Krama Bali group at the concert celebrating twenty years of the Colorado College gamelan, which was composed entirely of Balinese and very experienced American gamelan musicians. The concert featured several of Lasmawan’s pieces; “Sumiar” was the first piece that the group of Balinese and American guests and scholars performed together, on semaradana. I sat next to Lisa Gold and several of Lasmawan’s students from California in the gangsa section, just behind I Nyoman Wenten on ugal. Across the stage on the reyong sat Lasmawan, I Ketut Gede Asnawa, I Nyoman Saptanyana, and I Nyoman Suadin. Lasmawan’s student Tyler Yamin played kendang; David Harnish was on ceng-ceng.

This group of players, responsible en masse for three pieces, rehearsed for no more than two hours before performing. For the American musicians who had not previously studied one or more of the pieces, this was a daunting task; even having played “Sumiar” before on ugal and
having taught the piece to a gamelan myself, I was still caught off-guard by the speed at which Lasmawan dictated the piece should be performed—a difference heightened by performing on the semaradana, which contains more keys than a gong kebyar, making the “leaps” between the notes physically farther apart.

The Balinese musicians, however, seemed to need no rehearsal. Although the reyong part for “Sumiar” consists primarily of figures and flourishes that are standard for the instrument, achieving the correct coordination, a moderate speed, and an acceptable balance of dynamics had been difficult in my experiences working with American players. Without any sort of hesitation, these four Balinese master musicians played the “difficult” introductory figure correctly on the first try, setting a perfectly-interlocked tempo that was perhaps twice as fast as the final performance speed that the FSU gamelan players had achieved. Although the group as a whole still had to practice moving between the different sections of the piece—after all, most of the musicians rarely, if ever, had played with each other before—within the space of half an hour, the piece was up to tempo and if not mistake-free, respectable in its overall accuracy.

Fig. 4.6 I Nyoman Suadin, I Nyoman Sapatanyana, I Ketut Gedé Asnawa, and I Madé Lasmawan play reyong on “Sumiar”

Between playing different instruments, different pieces, and different genres, there is always a skill or technique area in which a Balinese gamelan player can improve. There are many pieces within standardized gong kebyar repertoire especially that are considered inherently easy or especially inherently hard, their customary interlocking patterns and tempos putting them out of the reach of all but the most skilled and practiced musicians. “Sumiar” would not present
too much of a technical challenge for skilled and experienced Balinese gamelan musicians; still, its adaptability in musical material, the required inter-ensemble communication skills, and its cheerful sound make it an ideal teaching piece—one that can be learned and appreciated by both the most novice and most expert players among Lasmawan’s extended gamelan community.
CHAPTER FIVE

PERSPECTIVES: STUDENTS AND COLLEAGUES IN TEACHING

Over the course of his time teaching in the United States, I Madé Lasmawan has taught countless students. Through learning “Sumiar,” others of his new compositions, and classics of Balinese gamelan literature, they have both learned to become proficient players and members of the broader transnational gamelan community. Some of the students have only studied with him for a day or two at a workshop; with others, there are musical and social bonds that extend back over twenty years. The relationships that Lasmawan has built with his students and that the students in turn have built with other American gamelan enthusiasts and other members of the Balinese community are varied and complex, each reflecting different parts of the transnational Balinese pedagogical and performative experience. Below, I profile and recount the stories of seven of Lasmawan’s students, ranging from those who are just beginning their journey in learning Balinese gamelan in the United States and in Bali to those who have grown up with Lasmawan’s family, maintaining lifelong personal and cultural connections to the Balinese performing arts scene. While a few individuals have begun to write about their experiences learning with Lasmawan (Macy 2010), the majority of them have not, and in this chapter I try to capture the essence of the stories of their experiences with gamelan and Lasmawan that they were kind enough to share with me.  

5.1 Ed Luna

The day of one of the temple ceremonies in Bangah in the summer of 2012, a new guest walked into Lasmawan’s compound. He was a man in his mid-thirties, already dressed in temple garb, and—most notably—speaking what sounded like fluent Balinese to members of Lasmawan’s extended family as they stood and chatted near the kitchen. As I soon learned, this man—Edmundo Luna (“Ed” for short)—was one of the world’s few non-Balinese linguists  

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31 Although the contextualizations for each interview were in general drawn from multiple conversations with each person, the direct quotes from each individual are drawn from a single, in-depth interview. Instead of repeating this citation throughout each section, I have cited them all at the end.
specializing in the Balinese language. He was also one of Lasmawan’s first American students, their association dating back to 1990 in San Diego, shortly after Lasmawan’s arrival there.

Fig. 5.1 Ed plays ponggang in a beleganjur procession in Bangah

Ed first learned about Balinese gamelan as a third-grader in San Diego when a graduate student from San Diego State University (SDSU), accompanied by a Balinese colleague, gave a presentation to the students. After seeing a film and some live demonstration of gamelan angklung and topeng dance, Ed recalls:

I was really awestruck by the presentation. I thought to myself, I have to learn this some day, no matter how long it takes me to learn it. I have to learn this music and this dance someday. If his [the graduate student’s] goal was to change one kid’s mind in an assembly of the two hundred to two hundred fifty of us at that presentation, then he and his colleague succeeded.

Having never heard of Bali before the presentation, he began to ransack the public libraries looking for more information on the Indonesian performing arts. He became fascinated by the stories, continuing his research and readings for years until he finally was able to begin to study the Balinese performing arts in person. At the public performing arts middle school that Ed attended, one of his dance teachers discovered Ed’s interest in gamelan and managed to get him in touch with someone affiliated with the SDSU gamelans. The contact was Bob Brown, and he invited Ed to come to the gamelan rehearsals. Although Ed was interested in both the Javanese and Balinese musical styles, he could only get a ride to one rehearsal per week. Having
remembered the spectacular nature of the Balinese gamelan, he chose to start there and a few weeks later, he met Lasmawan for the first time.

The gamelan group was comprised primarily of SDSU undergraduate students; Ed, at age fourteen, was by far the youngest person in the room. At the first rehearsal, the group was rehearsing an angklung piece in preparation for performance that weekend. After that one rehearsal, he recalls that Lasmawan “asked me if I could play over the weekend, because I got the hang of the tawatawa.” Unfortunately, he was unable to play in that first performance but noted that, after trying and being unsatisfied with a number of performing arts genres at his school, that “As soon as I got there, I finally found that I had found my niche.”

For him, Lasmawan’s gamelan teaching style where students learned by rote was refreshing; Ed still describes himself as “completely dyslexic” in terms of reading musical notation. After a few months of learning how to play, Ed also asked Lasmawan if he knew how to dance. Lasmawan—though he describes himself as “not a dancer, not like a dance major”—did know the basic steps, both from his training at KOKAR and watching the male dancers to accompany male solo dances.

It was difficult for Ed starting off. He recalls, “I remember the first few lessons….they kicked my ass. So painful, so very painful…I don’t know what Pak Madé would say [at the time], but he might say that I had the wrong physical type for starting out for this dance. A chubby kid, not really athletic.” They started with “Baris,” the basic male dance form, which can be taxing on a new dancer. The basic agem (upright body position) requires the dancer to squat, back arched, arms raised at a shoulder-high position, imitating the broad, bold gestures of a warrior. Ed notes that the instruction was “very traditional,” with Lasmawan physically manipulating Ed’s hands and shoulders to get him into position, then calling out the “beats” of the sequences, “1-2-3-4,” to ensure that Ed knew the choreography. The lessons, which occurred outside of the SDSU gamelan rehearsals, continued for a year and a half until Lasmawan began to teach Ed “Topeng Keras,” one of the more basic traditional masked dances. Since Lasmawan’s eldest son, Putu, was still only three or four years old, Ed became the group’s dancer, remembering that despite the age difference between himself and the older players that “they really didn’t mind that they had a junior high schooler in their midst; I was sort of a little brother of the group.”
After establishing the basic agem and choreography, Lasmawan spent a lot of time teaching Ed the relationship between drumming and dancing, especially giving clear cues to the drummer as he was dancing. Ed recalls:

He was very strict in telling me “Ok, you’re leading the ensemble, and you need to get these cues down pat…imagine if you were drumming. Ok, dance as if you were are drumming”…he’s not really a dancer but he knows, you knows…every competent drummer knows how to dance at least Baris, and from that they extrapolate what other cues are available.

After just a few years of study, Ed was able to make his first trip to Bali, during tenth grade in 1994. Lasmawan was not present at the time, but Putu and his mother were, so Ed stayed in Bangah with Lasmawan’s brother. He recalls that there was not much musically going on in the village, except practice for the local beleganjur competition (which Bangah eventually won), he was able to get used to life in the village. He then moved on to study more dance in the Ubud area with Anak Agung Kompiang Raka, picking up on working the forms where Lasmawan’s expertise had ended and building on other previous lessons he had with I Nyoman Wenten in the United States. He recalls that the dance “made so much more sense” with Raka, his theory for the difference being that while Lasmawan had been taught to dance at the academy and was not primarily a dance teacher, Raka had perfected his performance and pedagogy for years in the village within a system that seemed, to at Ed at least, to be more natural.

Ed continued to dance and play with the SDSU gamelan throughout middle school and into high school until Lasmawan left for Colorado following funding issues about which even the group’s youngest members were aware. Unable to consistently make SDSU’s Balinese gamelan rehearsals—I Nyoman Wenten was coming down from Los Angeles to teach at a time when Ed could not attend—he would play occasionally as “a ringer.” At the time, most of his gamelan energy was directed towards leading his own small gamelan group on an angklung that Lasmawan had helped purchase for him. The group, jokingly called “Ed Luna’s Gamelan Band,” was semi-serious, even planning to play at the school’s senior recital until it got canceled. By this time, however, he had heard that the SDSU Javanese gamelan, led at the time by Pak Djoko Walujo,32 was meeting on Friday afternoons, a time that he could come, and would be putting on a wayang at the end with Medianto as the dhalang. So, he notes, “For about a year, I ‘switched sides’”—a move that turned out to be a good start for the next portion of his gamelan career.

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32 He is now formally called Djoko Walujo Wimboprasetyo.
After finishing high school, Ed remained in California for college and graduate school. He found some type of gamelan to play with wherever he went. At the University of California-Berkeley, they did not yet have the semar pegulingan ensemble that they had now, only the Central Javanese group, which he joined. The final two years of his time in Berkeley, he had been invited by a fellow gamelan player to study with Gamelan Sekar Jaya; he played with them for two years, accompanying them on their 2000 tour to Bali. The tour to Bali with Sekar Jaya was a different type of experience from the last few times that he had gone. The large number of musicians dictated their schedule, and unlike his more village-centric studies before, Sekar Jaya played in both a mubaran (competition-style) performance “against” Gamelan Çudamani and another against the Japanese group Gamelan Sekar Jepun at the Bali Arts Festival. He notes that neither were really competitions; Çudamani, already a virtuosic group, played as such, while the musical sets that Sekar Jaya and Sekar Jepun did not match enough for comparison.

Continuing on to graduate study in linguistics at UC-Santa Barbara, he joined their gamelan group (Sundanese), as well as bringing up his angklung from San Diego. Although he worked to teach angklung pieces, it was a somewhat less satisfying experience than working with other groups; he often found that he needed to be drumming instead of being able to also dance. He would also drive down to play with the Central Javanese group at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Valencia, California, sometimes assisting Mike Pivak, a student of Pak Cokro, in leading the group. Still interested in dance but without a teacher in residence, he continued his studies with “Pak Video.”

During his graduate work, Ed was able to return to Bali two more times for his doctoral research about semi-formulaic use of Balinese language at village meetings. For the primary trip, he stayed with Gamelan Çudamani for his research, but continued to return to visit Bangah. Now, as an assistant professor of English Education at Mokpo National University in Mokpo, South Korea, Ed says he rarely is able to travel to Bali; despite the active interest in the Indonesian performing arts in neighboring Japan, he reports that South Korea is “not particularly sympathetic to Southeast Asian studies.” Still, he was able to return for a conference in the summer of 2012—the first time in seven years—when I met and played with him at the compound in Bangah. He wants to start a gamelan in Mokpo, maybe bring over his angklung, but in discussing the possibility, he gasps—“The shipping! I don’t want to think about it.”
Looking back on his years of Balinese arts studies, Ed finds himself in a unique position as a Balinese language linguist—an oddity on its own—who is also deeply versed in the Balinese performing arts. Although his focus is on language, Ed’s long history with the Balinese gamelan music makes him sympathetic to the issues of teaching the genres as a part of world music courses. He notes that rapid turnover is a major issue, as is the instability of communal memory. “In Bali,” he notes, “they can play almost anything on demand,” whereas even the strongest ensembles in the United States have a limited set list. However, in reflecting on his own experiences, he notes that without studying the Balinese arts, he would not have gotten interested in Balinese linguistics and thus be pursuing the path that he is today.

In this sense, Lasmawan played a foundational role in Ed’s overall education. He notes that, “Pak Madé’s initial instruction was a springboard for me to develop my own take on the Balinese performing arts. Because of the limitations of distance, we didn’t have that much time, because he was only there actively about two to three years before he moved to Colorado.” He continues, also, that his extensive education afterwards—although somewhat unusual—was not entirely unknown; after all, Lasmawan had studied with many teachers. Despite this, however, Ed recalls of Lasmawan, “As the primary teacher…that influence is still quite strong,” one that he will continue to carry with him as he pursues Balinese studies in the future.

5.2 Michael Fitts

Sitting onstage behind the ceng-ceng, perfectly accenting the rhythmic cadences of a dance piece played by Gamelan Tunas Mekar, it seems impossible to believe that there was a time that Michael Fitts was not involved with gamelan. The Tunas Mekar gamelans have lived in his basement in Auraria, Denver, for over twenty years; for the last thirteen, Fitts has served as the group’s president and in many ways, its organizer and public face. However, this hobby that has consumed the second half of his life was completely unknown in his first. He was not always involved with gamelan, or even with music. He jokes of his childhood, growing up in the ‘70s in Ithaca, New York, that he was brought up as a jock—“the athlete that my father never was.” He took strongly to sports as a child, particularly hockey and golf, but it took until he was out on his own that he came to be interested in music.
Starting in community college, he essentially constructed a music business degree with his coursework, taking practical music lessons, music appreciation, economics, business law, accounting, sociology, and at the same time teaching himself to play guitar, piano, bass, and drum machine. However, it was the music engineering course, taught at a local studio, that really caught his attention. “The idea that you could manipulate sound, change its colors, spatially orient it,” he notes, “…I was like, ‘man, yeah, let’s do that.’” In 1988 he moved out to Colorado to begin the program in music engineering and jazz guitar, but, he notes that “the place was falling apart.” He dropped out and for the next three years, he began working at a jazz club six nights per week mixing sound instead. Since then, Michael has made a career based on his work first as a sound engineer—mixing, doing live recordings, and promotions and marketing through Indiego Promotions—and later under his own label (Synergy Music) and distribution company (Synergy Distribution), where he employs 50-75 people. Always on what he calls “the bleeding edge” of music technology, Fitts is proud to note that he was one of the first people to work with
digital distribution of music, even before iTunes became popular. Now, he works primarily as a
digital consultant, working with global digital media, digital rights, and experimenting with
advertising on peer-to-peer file-sharing sites to be able to provide musical artists with sufficient
revenue.

His interest in gamelan grew out of the first of this series of jobs, mixing at the jazz club,
where Fitts met his future wife, Jill Fredericksen. At the time she was the new house drummer at
the club and had just returned from “a tour of Asia” which turned out to be sixty days studying in
Bali. Jill had run across The Denver Gamelan at a music festival in downtown Denver near the
very beginning of their performances as a group; according to long-term Tunas Mekar member
Dane Terry, her jaw had dropped and she was glued to the scene. Soon after, she began playing
with them in town and then was on her way to Bali to study with them—the “tour to Asia.” It
was right after that point that fits began to play. Fitts recalls, “I was basically interested in her,
and she was interested in gamelan, so I’m like, ‘Yeah, I’m interested in gamelan!’ And then it
was a year, possibly a little later, that the gamelan moved into my house. And it’s kind of been
there ever since”—and so has he.

Although Fitts first studied at a week-long intensive workshop with Gertrude Rivers
Robinson at CU-Boulder, playing gangsa, he made his Tunas Mekar debut playing jegogan,
which was easier to play and while also watching and following the other group members. Even
before the group had a permanent instructor, he notes that “The cats that jumped into this at the
beginning were all professional musicians,” and thus all learned fairly quickly.

He first encountered I Madé Lasmawan as a member of Gamelan Tunas Mekar during
Lasmawan’s first visit to Colorado in 1991. At the time, Fitts was heavily involved in the Denver
music scene and with the newly-christened Gamelan Tunas Mekar. He first became Lasmawan’s
student, then hosting the gamelan and the family at his house, then continued to assist with other
matters after “Vicki (Levine) gave him [Lasmawan] the real job” at Colorado College, which
enabled the family to be more self-supporting.

As a result, Michael has been with Gamelan Tunas Mekar through all of the group’s
adventures throughout the last twenty years, including Tunas Mekar’s only tour to Bali. He says
of the tour, “There we were, playing at the Bali Arts Festival for two whole hours. We brought
everything we had: ‘Teruna Jaya’ on angklung, the complete version of ‘Oleg Tamblingan,’” all
three sections, on angklung...they had us on Balinese television for years, showing this group
over and over again.” This was his second trip to Bali out of four total; the first, a year or two before, had been only for a few weeks, staying out in Bangah. He is looking forward to hopefully “bringing the whole band” out to Bali again in 2014—although this time, he says, “I want to play odalans, or in different villages. The arts festival—we did it, it’s cool, but we don’t have to play it all the time.”

Although he is only a member of Tunas Mekar, Michael has also performed with many of Lasmawan’s other groups. He notes that “At the beginning, when university groups weren’t as well-attended, Tunas Mekar members were ringers to fill in student performances. He’d tell as just a few days before the performance…but people wouldn’t know if they were going to play polos or sangsirh, gangsa or reyong…they’d just be stuck in the holes, rehearse it through, and pull it off.” Now, the courses are much fuller; while Tunas Mekar members will still play within the other groups, Lasmawan generally pulls his sons Adé and Aji first before having to ask community members.

Michael sees a real interconnection between the groups that Lasmawan teaches in the Colorado area, beyond the financial support from the Colorado College position that allows for Lasmawan to teach the other groups at all. He says that for a lot of Tunas Mekar members, they consider the university groups to be almost a farm system:

They’re like AAA baseball, and we’re the major leagues…when he [Lasmawan] finds somebody who’s really switched on, he asks them, ‘So—do you want to come rehearse with Tunas Mekar? [It is often] people who are really musicians and composers, really wondering what it’s about.

When they first come to rehearse, all new Tunas Mekar members are asked if they are going to be around for at least two years. When people join the groups, he says, “They get the high-level talk of ‘we’re going to play, and we’re going to rehearse, a lot…and the reason this doesn’t cost you is that we perform, and that you don’t get paid; all of the money goes into the group fund, which eventually filters to Madé.” The younger members seem willing and able to keep this commitment; in recent years, he notes, these additions from the local academically-based groups have changed the composition of Tunas Mekar as well, shifting the balance towards younger players (ages 17-30) rather than older players in their thirties through sixties. This has created somewhat of a split within the group—“any of us could be their [the younger players’] parents”—but overall it would be good for the continuation of the group, if the younger players stay in the area, which is uncertain.
The college and university groups, he also points out, are quite interrelated. “The common thread is Madé teaching roughly the same music to everybody, even up in Wyoming, even though they’re on a semar pegulingan orchestra, right?” This maintains a consistency and a shared, inter-group communal knowledge. The academic groups, he says, in attending each others’ performances also form a system that “feeds on itself”:

They see all these groups who are all pretty good, and all want to get better. The Metro group, they’re in their second session, and they’re at least twice as good as the first time. Some people were in both sessions and really raised the bar. When Tunas Mekar started, there was nobody to aspire to except the Balinese—and it wasn’t easy to go see them.

Now, however, with so many different ensembles to observe, there is always room for individuals to be able to find somewhere to learn more. Michael also sees Lasmawan’s consistent work with the groups over the years as a benefit not only for the university students, but also in terms of growing Tunas Mekar as a community:

That’s one of the distinctions between us and other places that I think’s interesting, is like, Sekar Jaya, for instance. They bring a new guru, or instructor, every year. So they’ll bring somebody who stays for nine months. So they get a real diversity of repertoire, and technique, and teaching styles, and all this sort of stuff, which is one really cool thing. In our situation, we get more consistency and family and community. I mean, Madé’s been here for twenty years, so, I mean, it’s a deeper experience than nine months. Neither I think is better or worse, it’s just different.

As the president of Gamelan Tunas Mekar, one of its longest standing members, and one of its most consistent organizers, Michael will likely have a large role in determining the group’s future. In asking him what he thought the goals were for the group, he stated:

Our main goal right now is sustainability, just to have enough younger people who will come and stay for ten or fifteen years, basically to replace ourselves…although it would be nice to have [the gamelan] have in a house, in its own space… It would also be nice to get into a regular groove of going [to Bali]. I mean, for some people, that might be the end of their vibe. They’ve done it, they’ve played, they’ve gone to Bali and performed before...or the other side of that is ‘Wow, I can’t believe I’ve gotten to do this, now I know what the Balinese sound like, now I really want to play.’

At the time of this writing, Gamelan Tunas Mekar was just beginning to play another tour to Bali for the summer of 2014—and planning to take all of the members. With Tunas Mekar’s
membership “completely full, except having three sulings” and the local academic groups continuing to grow, it looks like Michael’s hope may become a reality.

5.3 Aleanna Collins

For many of the American students who study with Lasmawan, their first discovery of gamelan is in college through hearing about it in a world music course or participating in a gamelan ensemble. However, for Aleanna Collins, gamelan is a way of life. Currently a freshman at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, she grew up in Boulder, Colorado, surrounded by gamelan culture. She says, “My mom is in Gamelan Tunas Mekar, and she has been for about 19-20 years, so I’ve been around gamelan forever. Before I was born, I was in the womb and she would play, and even when I came out, I was around it forever.” When she traveled to visit Bangah in the summer of 2012, Lasmawan joked that it was her second visit, even though she had never traveled to Bali before; the first time she was physically present at the village was when her mother had traveled there while pregnant nearly twenty years before.

Fig. 5.3 Aleanna (right, in green) plays ponggang with the author (Photo credit: Patrick Reeves)

Despite being surrounded by the sounds of gamelan music as a child and attending a number of concerts throughout her life, Aleanna did not start playing gamelan until she was in
high school. Before that, her primary musical interest was in Zimbabwean marimba. She first became interested when she saw some youth bands performing at the Pearl Street Mall, a well-known pedestrian-only shopping area in Boulder. Attracted to the music’s upbeat energy, she signed up for marimba summer camp at the Kutandara Center. She then played in the summer camp group for two summers before enrolling in regular classes throughout the academic year. She played with the youth bands ever since, all the way through middle school and high school.

Aleanna confessed to me, “I don’t really know what made me decide to start playing gamelan” approximately three years ago. She continued,

Just one day—it was a Sunday—and my mom was going down to rehearsal, and I was just like, “Can I come?” And she was like, “Yeah, totally, just come on down, hang out” and so I played the first half and did homework the second half…And then, they were like, “Why don’t you come back?” And then I came again on Sunday, and then I just kind of started playing more, and playing every rehearsal. And they’re just kind of like, “Why don’t you do this gig?” That kind of thing.

The core melody instruments (jegogan and calung) were the first ones that Aleanna learned to play in the gamelan before branching out to play gangsa. When she first began to work on the core melody instruments, the learning style was similar to how she had learned in the marimba group—by rote, following other players who already knew the piece. However, she notes,

But that hasn’t happened for awhile because there’s been a lot of new people on melody, and everyone else who knows the melody part is on gangsa, in that scenario we use notation, which is…it’s got its pros and cons, of course. That’s basically how we learn a new piece if it’s new for everybody. Because that’s the easiest, and then Pak can focus on getting the gangsa parts down and we just follow what’s written down. Although I don’t really like that; I don’t really like notation anymore, because too many times, like, you just get too dependent on the notation and they’re like, “Oh, so, we’re taking it away now, we’re erasing the white board and you have to know it,” and we’re like, “But wait, you have to warn us, you can’t just pull it out. Don’t do that.” So I’d rather learn by following

However, Aleanna noted that she does have an advantage in learning new pieces from hearing the music for so long. In talking about why she decided to continue playing the gamelan, she noted:

A lot of it, the coolness for me, is that when I started playing, a lot of it is already…in me? You know, I’ll recognize the patterns, and I’ll be playing something, and I’ll play it right. And it’s like, “I was never taught that, they didn’t show me that, I just kind of knew it.” And it was like, “Wow, is that because I
have been listening to it forever, you know?" So I think that played a huge part in it, you know, growing up with it I was hearing the patterns and the sounds and so all of the songs are very familiar.

Her experience, she notes, is very different from many of the other students her age who have learned to play gamelan within a university setting as opposed to through living with the music. She notes that:

They have like a very different knowledge of it [gamelan]; there’s a lot of knowledge on like the history and what each instrument and tuning and everything is, and for me it’s like, I sort of know it, but I know it from a very different side, because I’ve just been around it. So, no one has every explained to me “So, what’s gong kebyar,” like, I don’t really know because we don’t really go into depth on that in our gamelan, so I’ve got this weird sort of in-between knowledge in that I know what it’s like to play it and be in that gamelan, but I don’t have all of the history or the knowledge or all of that.

Her perspective also echoed a sentiment that Putu had emphasized to me on several occasions: that by growing up immersed in gamelan, it was difficult to appreciate its value before becoming an adult. She says, “It was just gamelan, it was…just what it was, it wasn’t anything super special. But as I started playing it, I started having a whole new sort of appreciation for it. It’s amazing. It’s so cool! And it took me a long time to realize how cool it actually was.”

Although Aleanna now loves playing the music, another part of what makes gamelan so “cool” for her is the community. In working with Gamelan Tunas Mekar, she notes that “They’re all my family, my friends, my aunts and uncles, you know, like extended aunts and uncles.” Further, she enjoys the multi-generational type of community that has formed around the gamelan:

I get to hang out with a lot of these older folks, and these college kids, and I get to hang out with Adé and Aji, and we all, all of us get to play together and we work together…both [the marimba bands and even moreso gamelan] integrate teenagers and kids; the adults have a lot of appreciation of what teenagers and kids have to offer. A lot of times, we get looked down on as the kids, the teenagers, they’re full of angst, they don’t want to do anything, you know? And if you’ve ever been a teenager, you know that you have value, you have things to offer, and there’s such a separation; there’s the teenagers and the adults in society. And that’s how it is. But with these bands, we get to work together. And everybody gains something. The teenagers, we get to learn from the older people and we get to work with the older people and we have these connections to these
adults that not a lot of my friends can say. They ask me, “You hang out with fifty year olds?” And I say “Yeah, for real! I party with them and it’s awesome!”

Many of these levels of appreciation deepened on her first “real” trip to Bali in the summer of 2012. Like when she started playing gamelan, Aleanna had not really planned on coming to Bali; “It just kind of happened,” enabled by funds from her grandparents and the need to find a distinctive topic for her senior project. Nor did she know much of what to expect, aside from her mom telling her “it’s going to be cold showers, and they do it like this, and you should be taking these kind of medicines, and you should bring a towel, and you should bring a lot of clothes because it’s going to take four days for everything to dry, that kind of thing.”

In terms of musical rehearsals, she notes that it’s “very similar” in Bali and that she already knew many of the pieces that the students were practicing in Bangah due to her time playing with Tunas Mekar:

It’s just running through things. A lot of the angklung pieces I know. I used to know “Taman Sari,” haven’t played it in forever; “Cendrawasih,” I know very well, we just worked on it a bunch; “Pakeling”—just pulling out of the hat—we kind of haven’t worked on played that in awhile, and “Rejang Dewa”—I don’t know that. But it’s very similar.

She found some of the culture surrounding the gamelan in Bangah to be similar as well, particularly in regards to the mixing of generations. She notes, “The kids are valued, and then the elders. I think it’s a big part of this culture; the whole family lives here and hangs out here and it’s like the grandmas and the babies, and it’s like, really cool. Because each person and age has its value and its place.” Becoming a part of the larger Bangah community was also a highlight of the trip, especially in comparison to the other ways that she could imagine experiencing Bali. She said:

I think that we’re doing it is very different from like a tourist approach, and I’d be really interested to see how that is compared to this. I really, really like this because—I kept seeing this traveling group of teenagers on the way here, they were going to Thailand or something, and it’s with this whole program that’s like “Rustic Pathways”—structured, in this little group…They’re all going together, and a lot of their flying needs are taken care of…and it’s just like, “Wow, Kendall [one of Lasmawan’s students with whom she traveled] and I had to figure it out.”

We’re just experiencing this. I’m staying with the people who live here, and I live in the village, and we get to see this women’s group come every night and get to experience that part of everybody’s daily life, for example, whereas the Rustic
Pathways people are going to go “do activities” and stuff. It’s very experiential in a more direct kind of experiencing way.

One fascinating part for Aleanna in becoming a part of the community in Bangah was being able to see a different side of Lasmawan’s family life, one that she had never before seen despite knowing him for her entire life. She mused:

It’s so odd, it’s like, this is what their life is outside of the US, and before they came to the States, this is what their life was like to a certain extent. But this is really where they came from and who they are, kind of, I think. And that’s just really interesting to me. It’s so cool to see this side. And, you know, it gives me more of an understanding of what they’re like in the States.

It’s like, wow, they had the opportunity to come to America, and they live there now, and seeing what it’s like here, it’s like, wow, if they hadn’t come, it would have been so different. You know, thinking about Putu. He would…maybe not be a completely different person, but I never would have known him, and it’s so interesting to think about how it would be different.

At this point, I interjected, “Yeah, well, you would have a whole entire strip of the Rocky Mountains with no gamelans.” Aleanna replied, “I know! That would be awful! I’m so glad they made it over to us.” She continued:

And at least around Colorado, it’s all Pak. He created so many of the little gamelans…well, he didn’t create all of them, but they were just boosted with his help, his presence turned into a full-on gamelan. It’s just amazing. He’s just an amazing person. The kind of power he has to start all of these gamelans, and help the ones that already exist. It’s just so cool. He’s really an amazing guy.

Having now moved away from Colorado to attend college, Aleanna is uncertain what her future will be in continuing to play both Zimbabwean marimba and Balinese gamelan. She says,

I see gamelan continuing more, or having the option to continue more, because there are gamelan groups all over the country. There’s a lot of places on the east coast, and the west coast, and the mid coast, and everywhere. And a lot of university gamelans. So, I think…I don’t know. I’m not sure it’s something I want to like, make a priority for the next place I’m going to be or live.”

However, after that, she paused. She added “But I’m not sure what it would be like to not have it in my life. I’ll have to see how important they are for my sanity and soul. We’ll see; maybe I should make it a priority to go find a place that has them.” At least she knows that if she returns to the Rocky Mountain area, she will always have a home with the gamelan.
5.4 Luke Geaney

Walking through the compound and listening to Lasmawan’s family members and students chatter in Balinese, Indonesian, and English, one voice always stuck out—the voice of Luke Geaney. Luke—a red-headed Londoner who now lives in Manchester and works for a web development company—is one of Lasmawan’s few current non-American students. Many of Lasmawan’s students come to study with him in Bali after playing in one of his university or community groups for several semesters. However, as Luke notes woefully, there are almost no Balinese gamelans in the United Kingdom. His two visits thus far to Bangah have provided him with his only chances to study and perform Balinese gamelan.

Fig. 5.4 Luke plays kendang with Lasmawan

Luke has been an active musician for most of his adult life. He has played electric bass, guitar, and drums in several bands representing different popular music styles, and he currently has a drum kit connected to a computer where “playing on drums will trigger events in a kind of pseudo-random fashion.” Additionally, he actively plays with a Javanese gamelan degung group.
in Manchester. However, he recalls that two experiences in his early years nearly turned him off from playing music entirely. The first happened when he was “a tiny kid, still in elementary school.” A man came out to show the children how to play the keyboard, but he was going too fast for Luke. He laughed in telling the story. “I became so upset that I ran from the building, crying.” He notes that “Going too fast when you’re learning something is something that I’ve always found kind of upsetting on an emotional level”—not just with music, but with everything. This issue was one that would later have to confront in studying gamelan.

The second negative experience occurred later in his schooling, when he was almost a teenager. He recalls,

> At our school…something unfortunate happened where they appointed a head of music who was… a shithead, basically, a basic nightmare. And he went, in four years, basically, from music as being one of the most popular A-level choices to being…no one picked it. And the school realized what they’d done and fixed it, but, it was too late for us. So I’d quit music before even GCSE [General Certificate of Secondary Education], because it was just a nightmare. The guy was just obsessed with playing the church organ…he was just myopic.

Luke did begin to play music around this time, however, in part because his brother and his father were both musicians. He chose the bass guitar because “that sounded pretty easy;” his choice coincided with the arrival of a bass guitar teacher at his school. Luke recalls, “He asked me ‘What do you want to learn?’” But Luke had never heard of approaching music lessons that way. He responded, “Rage Against the Machine.” They started working on the riff to “Bullet in the Head” and Luke recalls “I fell in love and began to practice all of the time.”

With all of his practicing, Luke soon got to the point where he could learn little else from his bass teacher and so decided to learn guitar. This time, he did not work with a teacher. He says, “I didn’t buy any books or anything, so chords would just be achieved by first principles.” During this period, his musical tastes changed; he became interested in electronic music, primarily Aphex Twin and Venetian Snares, and began to compose and play similar types of music with his friends during his late teen years. His interests broadened to include mathcore music in his early 20s, and he formed a band called “Hot Bone” with a friend, with which he toured for about six years.

Luke’s interest in gamelan happened almost by accident. He says, “Whilst sort of towards the end of [the touring], I found out about gamelan, which was at a party—it wasn’t even a party, I was just around and someone’s house after we’d been out for the night and this Greek guy I
know put on a CD...I was just instantly fascinated by it.” Much of this fascination centered specifically around gamelan gong kebyar. He explained that it was interesting to him for similar reasons that the EDM bands that he had followed had been interesting, noting that “I guess, quite a lot of the music that I got into is music that which, when I first heard it, I kind of couldn’t understand it? You couldn’t immediately pick it apart.” He also particularly liked the scale of gong kebyar (as opposed to angklung, which he favors less), as well as the ombak—the distinctive shimmering sound of Balinese gamelan that results from pairs of instruments tuned to not exactly the same pitch.

Unfamiliar with the Indonesian and Balinese languages, Luke initially struggled for a long time to find more recordings and information about the music. He explains,

So my obsession was increasingly growing and I was trying to hoover up whatever I could find on the internet, which was not particularly gamelan-friendly at the moment, and then I was at a party which would be not last Christmas but the one before (end of 2010). And someone asked me what kind of music I listened to, and instead of just saying, “Ah, everything,” I said, “Gamelan.” And I was talking about it. And an American guy came up to me and said, “Oh, you like gong kebyar? I studied that at university.” He had been one of Pak Madé’s students at Boulder and he had since moved to the UK, so he offered to put me in touch with Pak Madé. And so I hounded him very insistantly then to actually do that, and he eventually gave me Pak Madé’s Facebook, of all things. And then I sort of spoke with him briefly on that and he invited me to come out last summer, 2011.

Although he had never played Balinese gamelan or been to Bali before, Luke did not investigate substantially before deciding to come to Bangah. He recalls,

I had absolutely no idea what to expect, because I had written a big email to Pak Madé when he invited me out, I was kind of like, “Well, when should I come?” And he was like, “You can come anytime between May and August,” or something. And then I was like, “Well, when should I come?” and he was like, “Well, whenever you want.”

Luke eventually decided to plan to arrive around the time of the Bali Arts Festival, he said, thinking that “If it turns out that I get there, and it’s just a hole in the ground that I have to sleep in, then at least I’ll be able to go down and check that out.” Trying to follow up with Lasmawan, Luke recalls “I then wrote him a big email, saying like ‘Oh, should I bring, I’m thinking of bringing my laptop, and sound recording equipment, and video recording, and stuff,
should I bring this, should I bring that?’ And he wrote back and said, ‘Bring a towel, the ones in Bali aren’t very good.’”

With that concise piece of advice, Luke arrived in Bangah in the summer of 2011. His only prior experience was playing gamelan “for a total of about 45 minutes, and that was Javanese gamelan, and that took place at a Javanese gamelan workshop in Manchester where I live. So I came out being very much a noob, completely inexperienced, I’d never really played—I’d never really played properly.” His introduction to Balinese gamelan and performing culture occurred swiftly, and with little explanation. He remembers:

I was immediately put on the gong and had a baptism of fire, I think that’s the best way of putting it. And after awhile, I kind of insisted that I be moved to something, you know, less vital, something that you didn’t get in so much trouble for if you made a mistake, didn’t get the “gong stare.” So I ended up playing, we were playing angklung at the time with a group from Boulder out in Bangah, and I started playing the calung, so I guess we played that then for about three weeks, which culminated in two performances, one out at the Beratan Lake temple, which I think was the first time non-Balinese people had played there.

The maguru panggul style of learning very much tested his patience at first. He said:

When I got out here, fortunately I was aware that it was going to happen—because if I hadn’t been, I think it would have been an even more extreme shock. But it was, nevertheless, an extreme shock where we sat down and we just immediately started playing like it was nothing, no explanation whatsoever of what was about to happen. So, if I had been playing gangsa, I wouldn’t have been able to do anything. Because I didn’t even have the technique like dampening or any of that really.

And I found it really upsetting because people had said “Oh, you know, it works kind of differently where…it happens at a faster rate and things are not explained so much, but the flip side is, people have lower expectations that you’ll get it right. So, that kind of made sense to me, that was how it works. They’ll kind of repeat it at this top speed again and again and expect you eventually to get it. But the second part of that I did not find to be true. So playing the gong, if I made an error a single time, I would just get serious evil stares from Pak Madé. So it was very much a case of “you have to somehow innately know how to do it immediately” which I just couldn’t comprehend.

Because he was an experienced musician and percussionist otherwise, Luke quickly advanced from playing gong and tawatawa to working on gangsa and kendang the second time he came to Bangah, in the summer of 2012. He does not always learn the parts instantly; however, by making recordings, transcribing the parts, and studying them in his free time, he has
been able to progress much more quickly than many of the other students. However, making progress under this pedagogical system has not always been easy for Luke. He told me:

There were several times that I almost just threw a tantrum and stormed off but I realized, there’s nothing you can do that’s going to change the way this is going to be taught to you, so you just have to suck it up. So I don’t really approve of the method, but that’s it. But like, the kebyar that we’ve done since we’ve gotten here has been taught in that way and at the start, I found it very annoying, but I managed to pick it up. So it’s like, once you reach a certain base level of quality as a student, that way of teaching starts to be more effective.

In addition to the daily practices where Luke got his first hands-on exposure to gong kebyar, angklung, beleganjur, and gender wayang, he recalls that his schedule at the compound was very full that first year:

So the first day was the parade, then the next day I think we went to a tooth filing ceremony, and then the next day I think we were playing a gig already, with me on gong, absolutely bricking at, at this topeng thing at a temple ceremony where some American students were performing dances, and all this stuff. And I think the next day we ended up playing beleganjur on an open-backed truck, I think going up, like we were taking a barong up from the local temple to Beratan Lake, and then it was pretty much nonstop every day for the first three weeks—I think it was like, go and see the monkeys, go to the hot springs, go do this, like three big things a day, and then like, go and see the dolphins, go to the beach, go and play gamelan, and then there’d be a day where there was just constant, intense rehearsing; it’d be nonstop.

His visit also coincided with Elizabeth Macy’s class from Colorado College staying at the compound. Luke remembers that he would join them for class—“Because, why not?”—where he learned cultural skills like how to pray and began his first real reading on Balinese gamelan. (Although he is “not a reader,” he has now read all the way through Tenzer’s *Gamelan Gong Kebyar* once and has read Bakan’s *Music of Death and New Creation* “at least three times.”)

Many of Luke’s stories about what he has enjoyed learning in Bangah for two summers are about the hilarity of cultural “collision” between the foreign students and the locals within a musical context. He laughs, remembering how the American girl dancers were so confused when they were laughed at during their performance at the temple at Beratan Lake. (Lasmawan later had to explain to them that it had been because seeing these relatively pale and giant bulé [white foreigners] performing at a temple ceremony was quite a novelty). Another of these events was
going to a joged bumbung performance (a flirtatious folk dance in which the female dancers pull male members of the audience to dance with them). Luke recalls,

Some dirty, dirty action took place. I was like, “I had no idea this existed,” totally not expecting this, let alone be pushed into it, to actually have to do it. Yeah, Pak Katok just pushed me in the crowd. It was inevitable. Well, when we got there, they had a PA, and they were playing just kind of generic pop, and stuff like that, and I was kind of dancing about a bit in in preparation of what was going to happen. And then locals just started staring at me, and I was like, “something’s going to happen,” and then it did. But yeah, they went crazy whenever one of us went in. But we were a lot more reserved than the locals. Because we don’t know what the rules are. How far are you going to push it? Because I mean, all the cultural stuff you were going to read about, I don’t think you’d ever find out about it unless you were here, or sought it out…that’s not in the guidebooks.

During the intervening years in Manchester, Luke has continued to participate in local gamelan culture by playing with the degung group and going into London and other cities to attend gamelan workshops. Most of these—such as at the yearly Gathering of the Gamelans event that takes place in York every year—contain no Balinese gamelan at all. However, he was able to participate in a workshop with Andy Channing, in London. He notes that although they learned classic Balinese pieces on gong kebyar—”Baris” and a bit of “Hujan Mas”—the pedagogical style could not be more different than how he had learned from Lasmawan. Luke notes of Channing, “He is not Balinese and therefore…at the two-day workshop and the gamelan summer school, he taught it in a very English way—he explained that it was cyclical, that the gong was at the end.” However, he also suggests that the pedagogical style fits its audience: “Bizzarely, [in the United Kingdom], gamelan seems to attract middle-aged women. They would not deal well with Pak Madé sitting down and suddenly blasting them with kotekan! That would not be a practical way to approach it.”

Luke laments the lack of Balinese gamelan in his home area. He says, “It’s such a frustration, and I’m envious of a lot of the people who come from US groups who just walk up to university and there’s a Balinese gamelan there and a Balinese guy to teach them.” Although he would be interested in working with a gamelan or even eventually running one in Manchester, the money, space, and his lack of experience in playing are currently prohibitive. He is also concerned that the United Kingdom has already been flooded with Javanese gamelans, and not in a good way. He told me:
There’s this horrible situation in the UK as well where at a certain age, kind of pre-GCSE, between 10 and 13 or something, there’s a music program that’s nation-wide and it’s in the curriculum, and part of it is gamelan. And what they started doing is this guy started buying incredibly cheap, crappy Javanese gamelan sets that look like they’re made out of plastic. They come from Indonesia, but they look like they’re super, super cheap, made out of plates welded together and stuff. They sound like crap. They look like crap. So you’re going to get to a situation eventually where every child who has gone to school has gamelan and that will have been their experience of it. It’s like, “Oh, God, where is the light at the end of that tunnel? This is not good news, this is not good news!” I’m really glad that I didn’t even have that, I would rather have nothing. So the problem is massive.

In one conversation that I had with Lasmawan and Luke, Lasmawan told us that “I almost went to the UK;” Luke noted what a difference that might have made. Although there almost seventy active adult gamelans in the United Kingdom, the Balinese groups represent only about a quarter of these groups. Although he would like to introduce Balinese gamelan to Manchester, Luke says “I feel compelled to not screw it up…just don’t do harm before doing anything else. Don’t go in there and just balls it up. At least just do nothing. And then once you can do something positive, just do that.” Until then, he continues to quietly purchase instruments of his own to formulate his own beleganjur heavy metal band, Niskala, and plan the next trip to Bali.

5.5 Bob Ledbetter

Dr. Robert Ledbetter (“Bob”) sits on one of the balé, looking out over the compound. It is early June, and he and the group of students that he has brought from the University of Montana only have a few days left in Bali before returning home. A handful of his students are making use of the last rays of post-dinner light before the sun sinks behind the mountains and the compound is only illuminated by florescent lights. One is busy wrapping a mask he bought in a market in newspaper, readying it to make the long journey home. Others are sitting at the balé with the chessboard, watching the latest game unfold. Another who has been sick for the last few days appears to grab a late dinner. Outside, the women’s gamelan is continuing their practice, and it sounds like someone else is playing on a rindik (small bamboo gamelan instrument). We move into the kitchen eating area to talk, away from the busy soundscape of the compound as dusk turns into night.
Fig. 5.5 Bob sketches designs for wayang with I Madé Surata

Bob, currently the head of the percussion program at the University of Montana, had been interested in “world percussion” long before he discovered gamelan. In the early 1980s, he recalls his first exposure to steel band music:

My introduction to steel band was when I went to get my master’s at the University of Akron and I was a graduate assistant. He [Bob’s advisor] had just bought steel drums and had no idea what to do with them, and I didn’t either, and I said, “Well, we’re going to figure it out together”…and I’ve been doing it ever since.

His knowledge of steel pan from those several years studying at Akron would eventually in part lead him to his first experiences in learning gamelan. After completing an M.M. at the University of Akron, he began his Ph.D. at the University or North Texas, where he was given an assistantship to teach the steel band there. In addition to working with West African percussion
and some other non-Western percussion genres, he also discovered gamelan. He describes the experience as “kind of hand-me-down”: “We had a Javanese gamelan…but we didn’t have any Javanese teachers, so what we did was what other people had done.”

Bob did not pursue gamelan any further until taking his second (and current) teaching position at the University of Montana:

But, so then I had a colleague (Dorothy Morrison) who was teaching world music. She was an adjunct professor and she was teaching world music, and music appreciation, and so we shared an, I guess an enthusiasm for ethnic music or world music, ‘cause I already had a steel band going and stuff like that and I’d done some African stuff too. So we started doing stuff together, so we bought some djembes and some dununs from Guinea and I had already bought drums from Ghana. And then, I can’t remember exactly how she knew about Madé Lasmawan, but she said, “Hey, what do you think about getting and starting a gamelan?” And I was, “Yeah, let’s do it.”

The gamelan first arrived in 2002 and with it, I Madé Lasmawan. Although Bob had played Javanese gamelan before, he had never really heard of Balinese gamelan—but there was the instructor and there were the instruments,

Brand new, yeah. And the first time we played on it, he did a naming ceremony, and you have to, you know, bless the gong, so the gong of course is the center of the ensemble so we did a ceremony where we all, you know, it was a Hindu ceremony that he did where he’d bless the gong and then, it was all very mystical and mysterious, like, “What is he?...” And we didn’t know what the name was going to be until he turned around after and said, the name of your ensemble is this…Jaya Budaya, victorious culture.

The gamelan quickly became an integral part of the UMT percussion program. There are two primary studio percussion classes for the percussion majors: Percussion Ensemble and World Percussion Ensemble, both led primarily by Bob. In addition to the gamelan, there are a number of other world music traditions represented:

We have two types of African…we have drums from Ghana and Guinea, so, West African, then we have Brazilian ensemble, and we have the gamelan, steel band, and then we also do Afro-Cuban. And then we also do Mexican marimba band…it’s still world music, but it’s a little bit more accessible, you know, than gamelan is to the common person.

All of the world music ensembles, excluding the steel band, perform on a spring concert called World Rhythms that takes place every year in February. In the world percussion class, students study multiple of the different genres every year. Several of the ensembles, such as
West African drumming and gamelan, rotate on a bi-yearly schedule, with a guest artist coming up to instruct the ensemble in its featured year. He sees having the guest musician come and teach the different ensembles as very important, even allocating a large portion of the school budget to it, because “there’s so much depth” in all of the traditions.

Bob notes that unlike many other universities that offer gamelan, the gamelan ensemble at UMT is “very limited on the time we have to get the gamelan together because of the way we do it.” As only one of several world percussion genres that the students are studying, they only really begin to learn gamelan at the beginning of the spring semester, although Bob will try to teach them some about Balinese religion, history, culture, and the basics of the gamelan before the fall semester ends. After that, however, the students generally only have two hours a week for four weeks, plus a week of intensive rehearsal, to put together the pieces—five or six of them—before performing in the concert.

The ensemble starts every semester with the basics. Lasmawan generally sends notation and sometimes audio or video recordings to Bob, who will familiarize himself with the piece and then re-transcribe the parts for the students onto small, single sheets of paper. Because of the short time for the students to learn how to play, using entirely traditional teaching methods or requiring the students to memorize the pieces is “not practical.” But, using transcriptions has its own issues. Bob says, “On the first day, I try to explain to them what the notation is, how to read the paper, because it’s not ‘normal’ notation, there’s no staff or noteheads or anything, it’s just numbers;” for most students, this is their first time trying to read non-Western cipher notation.

At the beginning, Bob also must assigns students to instruments—a task made easier because most of the gamelan musicians are majors in his percussion studio, and he already knows their general aptitudes and playing abilities. He says,

A freshman, I might put on tawatawa, or someone with less experience, I’ll put them on gong…someone who’s a good drummer makes a good tawatawa player, because they tune in to the drummers. And typically, reyong are my upperclassmen, and whoever plays ugal is an upperclassman and can be a leader, because Madé’s playing drums and I’m playing drums. And then whoever plays sangsih is slightly better too.

However, he also notes, “Something I generally do educationally is rotate people around… we kind of rotate so they don’t stay on the same instrument the whole time. It’s the same with steel drums. Not a lot. If you rotate too much, you don’t get good at anything.”
After a month of rehearsal, Lasmawan comes in for a week of intensive rehearsal. Since the students have been learning the parts, all except sometimes the reyong, the drum, and sometimes the nuances, such as section repetitions or dynamics. So, as Bob notes, “When Madé gets there, he’ll say, ‘All right, let’s play this!’” As of late, Bob says, the week that Lasmawan gets there,

We’ve conveniently had President’s Day off (that is the week he comes), which is a Monday. So that Monday, [we rehearse] that morning, afternoon, and evening, and really get it locked together that day. And then we’ll have a Wednesday rehearsal, and then we’ll have a Thursday night rehearsal, and then possibly Friday morning rehearsal and then Friday night concert. So it’s amazing how we get it together, I don’t know.

There are occasionally some issues. The students sometimes have a hard time understanding the cyclical nature of the pieces, or how certain parts anticipate others, or translating Lasmawan’s pedagogical style— “he’ll sing the syllables, or just sing the part, just dive in at the middle of something”—into something that they can understand. Additionally, he sometimes considers trying to make the program work a different way, with Lasmawan more present; however, it does seem to be working out in general. He says,

How these Balinese people teach in America—it’s variable based on the situation. Other schools, they’re full time, they teach all the time. He’s there for a week, every two years, you know? It puts more weight on me, you know…we’re limited, because there are always new people, but we keep getting better and better, because [I keep learning] and I’m able to teach them better.

Despite the relatively short rehearsal time, the students generally manage to learn the material well—much to the delight of the audiences. Bob reports that of the three concerts that the percussion studio performs every year, the World Rhythms Concert is always the best-attended; since their audience numbers now regularly exceed five hundred attendees, he says that they have even had to move into a larger hall. Of the audience members, he notes, “Almost all of them are community members; I wish I could get more students to come!” Because of the presence of the university, Bob suggests that Missoula is “the most diverse city in Montana,” the World Rhythms concerts with their headlining musicians from faraway places such as Ghana and Bali bring a greater diversity to the local musical community, providing Missoulans with access to performances of genres that they might not otherwise be able to hear live.
In addition to adding diversity to the local music scene, Bob also sees the training that his percussion majors get on gamelan and with the other world music genres as increasingly essential to their future careers as musicians. He says,

Nowadays, world music is becoming more and more expected…job qualifications nowadays are ridiculous. You have to be able to do drumset, and steel band, and gamelan, and. That’s the advantage—because it’s my program, then all of my majors have to do it. If they go to the University of Montana, they have to play steel drums, the have to play gamelan, they have to play African…I want my majors to get the experience so that when they leave, they can say, “Yeah, I know how to do that, yeah, I know how to do that”…I feel like I’m a really good training ground for people to go off and do graduate work.

Having the students come study in Bali is an experience that he also hopes to repeat, noting the added depth of study through living in the compound, longer rehearsal times where they memorize music, etc. This was his second trip to Bali, and one of a longer series of trips abroad throughout the 2000s. Although commenting that it would be nice to bring the students to other areas of the world as well, he says:

Compared to Africa and Brazil, it feels more like you’re living in the culture, not just visiting. I mean, obviously, we’re not working in the rice fields or anything. You’re living in a village, people start to know your name, you’re making all of these friends, and everything. And getting students away from the norm in the States…there’s none of that Facebooking or texting all the time, like at home.

Although Bob has had some students graduate and go on to be heavily involved in steel band and Afro-Cuban drumming styles, he has not yet, to his knowledge, had a student go on to seriously pursue gamelan study. However, he sees value in both the Montana and Bali study both for himself and his students in a broader way as young performers and teachers. Going to Bali, he says, has brought him:

A deeper sense of appreciation for the music…I got more of a sense of the culture, so when I teach it, I can be even more respectful of it so they get even more of an experience than just sitting in the world music room, playing world music instruments. I can be a better teacher, you know. I can be a better conveyor of the culture around the music. It’s really a lot different when you do it from a cultural perspective, you know, not just “I can play this on my drumset.” Although we do that too.
The Missoula percussion students, newly finished with their bi-yearly gamelan, may not play again for a few years—or maybe not ever. But it is Bob’s hope that it is an experience they will take with them as musicians or teachers.

5.6 Dorothy Morrison

Every year for a month during the spring, Lewis and Clark Elementary school in Missoula, Montana, is host to a unique “guest”: a four-toned Balinese gamelan angklung. Brought in to the school by its music teacher, Dorothy Morrison, the set provides an experience for the five hundred kindergarten through fifth grade students enrolled there that is almost unique within the United States: to study gamelan for six consecutive years as a part of their primary school education. In addition to teaching her students at the school, Morrison leads the Missoula community gamelan group, Gamelan Manik Harum (guided by I Madé Lasmawan) and an after school gamelan ensemble for a select group of the Lewis and Clark fourth and fifth graders called Kocong! For Morrison, her work with these three groups is an extension of a long-held love of gamelan music.

However, she did not always foresee herself working with Balinese gamelan, or even playing gamelan at all. She says that:

It is a surprise to me that it's Balinese gamelan [that I do now], because I started my journey as an undergraduate student at Wesleyan University and even then I didn't know I would be doing gamelan; I was trying to do African drumming and I could never get registered for the classes because they always filled up, so as a second choice, I did Javanese gamelan. And Sumarsam was the teacher at Wesleyan University and his wife Maeny was doing the dance, and I loved it. It was fabulous. And at that time I was able to become friendly with Sumarsam and Maeni and so I did Javanese gamelan and I did Javanese dance while I was an undergraduate.

However, after college ended, she was no longer around a gamelan regularly until she and her husband moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan for her husband to pursue graduate studies. There, she played with the university gamelan led by Judith Becker “for just a year” before they moved to Montana where, at the time, there were no gamelans.

Morrison revisited gamelan again, however, in her work at the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center at the University of Montana, which sponsors a number of Asian studies initiatives. As a part of that series, she brought in Gamelan Sekar Jaya, who performed on angklung. The community interest in gamelan in Missoula at the time was already strong; she
recalls that “It was a free concert, and it was in one of the larger theaters in Missoula, and it was completely packed, full house, long line down the block, all around the street.” Also working at the time as an adjunct professor of music at UMT, she brought in Jarrad Powell of Gamelan Pacifica (a Javanese gamelan group specializing in contemporary works). Bringing over his Javanese gamelan in a U-Haul from Seattle, Powell collaborated with the UMT percussion ensemble, bringing the university students their first gamelan-playing experience.

Having whetted the UMT appetite for gamelan, Morrison tried next to bring in Michael Tenzer from Vancouver—“because I knew he was in Vancouver and, I dunno, it’s not that far—and so I called Michael Tenzer to see if he would come as a guest artist, and he said, ‘Well, you could bring me, but you should really bring a Balinese person, because there’s Madé Lasmawan in Colorado Springs, in the Rocky Mountains, you should bring him.’” Calling up Lasmawan, she recalls:

He was very friendly right away, and right away he says, “Well, you should just buy a gamelan!” The first time I talked to him—”You should just buy a gamelan!” And I said, “Well, I don’t know, we don’t have anywhere to keep it, and I don’t know if that’s what we should do. And he said, “Well, it’s not that much money, and it’s small; you can get the angklung and it doesn’t take very much room to store.”

The UMT gamelan, as described above, arrived in 2002. But soon after the gamelan’s arrival, Morrison left the university due to the instability of her adjunct position, and instead became certified to teach public school. But, she says,

I knew I was not done with the gamelan. I knew I still had more things that I wanted to do and one of the first schools I taught at, somebody had donated a Balinese drum. It was a kendang, and I thought, “Ok, this is the cue; this is telling me that you need to have Bali.” So I called Madé again, and I said, “So, I want to be able to buy a gamelan for me, now.” And so, my husband and I decided that we would buy it for our own use and share it with the community in Missoula.

The gamelan—a lavishly-carved four-tone angklung—was in part composed of parts of Lasmawan’s family angklung, which he had repurposed in commissioning a new family gamelan to use in Bali in honor of Putu. The gamelan finally arrived in the United States in the fall of 2007. Transporting the gamelan up to Montana proved to be quite a trick; Morrison recalls that:

In 2007, the gamelan arrived and Madé—I always tell my students this—Madé had a Honda CRV and he packed all of the instruments in the CRV from Denver, and he drove to Laramie, and at the same time I had a Honda CRV, and I drove from Missoula to Laramie on a really, really snowy November weekend. So, he
basically unloaded from his Honda CRV and put it into my Honda CRV, and I drove back to Montana...It was me and all of the gamelan in the car. But luckily, he was really good at packing it; I have not been able to repack it since, I can’t get it into the one car anymore.

She started teaching the community group and her school children within that year; the gamelan was named in February 2008, on the night of a lunar eclipse in Bali, which Lasmawan said was particularly auspicious. Lasmawan has come up to teach the group at least once a year ever since.

For most of the year, the gamelan is stored in Morrison’s living room; she told me that “I always say, my eldest daughter moved off to college and the gamelan moved in.” The community group, Manik Harum, has been coming to the house with increasing frequency to practice. Morrison recalls,

So initially, I did just like, a six-week intensive, I said, “This will only last six weeks,” you know. And I think we met twice a week for six weeks. And then for a while, it was “We’re going to meet for a season,” you know, “We’re going to meet just September to January to play for the New Years’ Eve”. And some of those times we were playing twice a week, and then some of those times we were just meeting once a week. And then, it turned into “No, now we’ll meet every other week, throughout the school year.” And then, “No, we’ll meet the first three weeks of the month, and then we’ll take the last week off” for the school year. And then, now we pretty much do the three weeks with one week off, meeting once a week, but now we’re even playing through the summer.

Morrison leads the group, helping members choose which instrument they should learn to play for a new piece. The group—usually numbering between fifteen and twenty individuals from all sectors of the Missoula community (excluding children)—plays primarily a mix of traditional angklung repertoire (such as “Nedes Lemah”) and dance pieces adapted from gong kebyar repertoire. When Morrison teaches, they traditionally have learned from notation, although they are starting to experiment with learning pieces by rote and performing pieces by memory. The group usually performs on average about twice per year—in the summer and in the winter—at a wide variety of venues, including at public schools, farmer’s markets, a peace festival at a Buddhist retreat center, and for a New Year’s Eve First Night concert.
Once or twice a year, Lasmawan will make the long trek up to rehearse the group. When
the university brings him up to work on their spring concert, he will often spend his free time
working with Manik Harum and Morrison’s children’s groups; the ensemble will also bring him
up in August to run daily workshops with the ensemble musicians for four days. He works with
Morrison in alone in the mornings, the full ensemble in the evenings, and most recently has
begun to teach repertoire for the group’s newly acquired gender instruments and beleganjur.
Bringing new music for the ensemble to work on for their next performance, or harder versions
of old repertoire, Lasmawan’s presence with the group is always “challenging” to the players,
making the music “jump to the next level,” Morrison notes. She says,

At first, in the earlier years, it was really hard to play with Pak Madé, because
people would get used to my style and how I was teaching, and when Pak Madé
would come, you know, he would take things faster, and then he would add the
more complicated drumming, and that made people feel a little more confused,
but I feel like we’ve gotten better and better, and now, when he plays with us,
everybody’s like “This is so great!” You know, instead of being confused they
really enjoy it more.

Over the six years that Lasmawan has been working with the group, Morrison says, “We
really have come a long way. The first performance we gave when Madé first came, he wanted
to give a demonstration to the audience of kotekan—we couldn’t do it! And he said, ‘Maybe in five years.’” Now, the group not only learns kotekan, but also interlocking drum patterns.

Additionally, members from the group have traveled to Bali together twice, once in 2009 and once in 2011. Among the experiences that Morrison recalls traveling with the group occurred during their second trip, when they overlapped in staying at the compound with some of the students from Colorado College.

At first, everyone was like, “Oh no, there are so many people here,” but then when they started sitting down and everyone started playing gamelan, they got all excited because the music was just so…people hadn’t played in that big of a group before, so they really liked it.

The Colorado College students, some of whom had studied more extensively than the members of the Montana group, also provided a new example to the Manik Harum musicians of new musical goals to reach for and accomplish.

In addition to her intensive gamelan study in Bali, every year Morrison engages in intensive teaching of gamelan angklung: to her elementary school classes, who work with the gamelan in music class every year for approximately seven classes, all divided into the classes generally representing students of a single grade. Morrison says, “I can’t believe how successful that’s been with the kindergarten through fifth grade. It’s unbelievable how much they love it. They love it.” Starting in kindergarten, the students learn the very basics of history, culture, and gamelan technique, which they build on using similar repertoire every year throughout elementary school until they are able to play simple interlocking kotekan parts by the end of fifth grade.

Morrison’s pedagogical use of the gamelan in class overlaps substantially with the themes and principles that she would employ with those age groups using any instrumental genres. This is particularly true with the younger children:

The younger group, it’s a lot of teaching about the instruments themselves. Because that level in a music class, you’re doing a lot about teaching the kids about how if an instrument is big, as opposed to if an instrument is small, how is the sound different? And gamelan is perfect for that type of teaching. They [the keyed instruments] all look the same, except they’re all different sizes.

In large part, Morrison teaches the same musical repertoire across the different grades. Often starting with Balinese folk songs and musical games or other songs reflecting Indonesian
culture, she will teach the children to sing first, then add in gamelan parts as they progress through the grades. Here, she describes the process in teaching a simple song:

And at first, I just teach them a song that I learned from James Harding who used to play with Sekar Jaya. James Harding is a member of a national music organization—as I am—called the American Orff Schulwerk Association, and so I met him through that, and he taught this song called “Selamat Pagi,” and it’s really simple, it’s a very simple song. There’s only four phrases in it. The words are “Selamat pagi, selamat siang, selamat sore, selamat malam” (good morning, good noontime, good afternoon, good night). And you learn a little Indonesian language, and it has a very simple gong structure.

So very early, with the little kids, they just take turns playing gong on the parts of the song and they also do movement for the times of the day—so you know, where’s it at the beginning of the day, where’s it at the middle of the day, where’s it at the end of the day, where’s it at night—and so they do a movement where they are a sun rising in the sky and setting. And we talk about where east is, and west is, and that sort of stuff, and they do the movement. Meanwhile I’m teaching them that song, they’re hearing it, and I think by third grade then, they are ready to play “Selamat Pagi,” they’re ready to play it on the melody instruments, and by fourth and fifth grade, then I start teaching the kotekan that goes with it. So they’ve heard that song since kindergarten, and by fifth grade, they’re doing kotekan with that.

Teaching technique on the instruments is difficult, especially to the youngest of the students, whose motor coordination is not yet well-developed. With the children of the same grade level (and gamelan-playing experience) all in classes together, there are no “more advanced” players to imitate; Morrison combines gamelan playing techniques with other principles for primary music education to teach them the basics. She says:

So going back then to the beginning, teaching the concept of “squeezing,” that has been one of my biggest challenges—how do you teach kids to do that technique? So I have a song, which is a pretty silly song, but it goes—well, it’s singing, playing, singing, playing, singing, playing (with the notes numbered one through four):

Here’s what we do

One-squeeze-two-squeeze-three-squeeze-four-squeeze
When we play the gamelan
One-squeeze-two-squeeze-three-squeeze-four-squeeze
Squeeze the metal keys
One-squeeze-two-squeeze-three-squeeze-four-squeeze
That will stop the sound
Four-squeeze-three-squeeze-two-squeeze-one-squeeze
Even this exercise is adapted based on skill level; younger children try first by squeezing numbered, folded paper in time while they sing the melody. The first and second graders will add gong and basic reyong; the third graders will add the “byong-byuk” patterns on the reyong and play the notes smoothly, damping one key at the same time that they play the next. Finally, the eldest children will both sing and play, as well as work on improvising with the melody.

Although the children play throughout their time at the school and may give mini-performances, it is the fifth graders who primarily will work with Lasmawan when he comes and give larger performances at school assemblies. However, the children need more time to learn the pieces, and she only brings the gamelan to the school grounds for the one intensive month because it is too distracting otherwise. Instead of practicing on the gamelan, she has found other ways to teach them in advance:

Being from the Orff Schulwerk school of teaching music, I have a lot of mallet instruments in my room—xylophones and metallophones—we transfer it over and start them on a makeshift gamelan. So they get started on the music, but not the real instruments, and by the time the gamelan month comes around, which culminates in a performance with Madé, they’ve already learned the music and we just transfer it to the gamelan instruments, which they like much better. They’re always like, “When are we going to play on the real thing?”

Because the students have already practiced for so long on learning the music and because Lasmawan’s time working with them is so short when he comes, the students are basically “ready to go” when he does come to the school. Morrison says:

He meets with each 5th grade class for about forty minutes on the piece that they will perform for the school. And then we do a performance, which is about a forty-minute performance with him in the gym. They’re pretty much ready to go. It just adds that authenticity to their experience…and the minute he does a drum solo, they’re just, “WHOA!”

Even as much so as watching Lasmawan, the kids would be fascinated when he would bring his sons up to perform with the elementary group. Morrison relates,

When they were a little bit younger, they [Lasmawan’s sons] would go to school with my son—Adé and Aji would hang out at the school and then Adé would come out after being at the school, after being on the playground, and everybody would think “They’re so nice and friendly,” everybody loves them, and then he would come out as the Baris dancer, and the kids, their jaws would just drop. They think that’s pretty cool.
After playing with the group for a few years, some of the children had become particularly interested in continuing their gamelan studies. To fill this need, Morrison started an afterschool program for a select group of fourth and fifth graders, featuring gamelan players and “movement specialists” (a name for “dancers” that will not scare away the boys). The group practices and performs at events across the city, sometimes alone, sometimes with Gamelan Manik Harum. As a separate ensemble, they also requested a separate name:

They’re called “Kocong!” and “kocong” means “wild kid energy.” At first I asked Madé, “How do you say ‘children of Manik Harum?’” And he said it’s Rade Manik Harum. And that was two years ago, and I told the group, “Ok, your name is Rade Manik Harum” and they said “We don’t want to be part of Manik Harum!” They didn’t like it, so I said to Madé, “What’s another name, what do you call wild kids?” And that was perfect; “KoCONG!”

Despite the general enthusiasm of Morrison and the musicians in the groups that she directs, there have been some difficulties. Once they enter middle school, the children in Kocong tend to leave the group behind. Finding funding to bring up Lasmawan to teach is also an issue; Morrison has managed to receive grants from the Montana Arts Council to sponsor Manik Harum as well as receive regular small sums for the school gamelan from its parent-teacher association. The first two years, Morrison even wrote to the Indonesian consulate in Los Angeles and received funding from them; one year, they even sent up a delegation to watch the students perform! Finally, Morrison reports of her elementary school students, “As their teacher, it gets really tiring on your body. It’s six hours a day of gamelan! It’s a lot of sound. Seriously, this last year, there were times I couldn’t sleep.”

However, the benefits seem to far outweigh the drawbacks. Although Morrison acknowledges educational benefits for the adult musicians of Manik Harum and their audiences, the lessons that she teaches through gamelan seem much more apparent as they experienced by her elementary school students. She says,

We’d sit down all together at the same time, and it’s in that V-formation, so they’re facing each other, and this kindergartener goes, “Ah! I feel like I’m part of a group!” And I realized that part of the power of it is that doing something all together, you know? It’s powerful. And of course, you’re sitting on the floor, cross-legged, and I make everybody sit cross-legged, I make everybody sit that way before we start, and there’s something about it seems so highly structured that I think the kids really like it. I’m talking about all kids. It’s safe, you know. It’s a safe space where you know what to expect.
And those kind of lessons—like the lessons about respecting the instruments, and what it’s like to be part of a group, and how your part fits in with other parts, you know, and just playing the gong the one time, it’s just so awesome for the kids, you know? They can’t wait to get to the gong. So those were the lessons that I didn’t expect initially to show them—and I’ve learned actually that there’s all of those powerful lessons about being a good person, and being a part of a group, and waiting for your turn, and all of that, so they…yeah, there’s some sort of very positive energy that emanates from the gamelan and seems to come with the gamelan, you know?

Of all the lessons, though, perhaps the most important one that Morrison imparts upon her group is the idea of respect and continuity: “I really spend a lot of time about respecting the instruments and how special they are, and how I want the instruments to last for their children, you know, I say that to them. And,” she continues, “They treat them respectfully.”

The ideas of continuity and education permeate her goals for these different gamelan groups. For Gamelan Manik Harum, Morrison’s “pipe dream” is to tour rural areas of Montana with Lasmawan and his family. For the elementary school groups, the goal is simpler: just “keep it going.” She says,

I feel that the students have gained so much from it, that it really has a positive impact. In fact, it’s the only thing that they remember about my music class when they leave. So it’s really powerful that way.

Thinking about her work with the Lewis and Clark students and especially Manik Harum, Morrison says “Sometimes it’s hard to be the leader when I’m not an expert. I think, “What am I doing? How did I think I could do this?”” Despite the fact that she is still an active student of gamelan herself—part of Lasmawan’s “next generation”—she herself is bringing the music and the ideals of the gamelan to her own “next generation” of young students in Montana.
CHAPTER SIX

CONTEXTUALIZING LASMAWAN AND HIS WORK

In teaching students at his home in Bali as well as in the United States, Lasmawan joins a long tradition of Balinese performing arts teachers, both in terms of teaching individuals and in groups. Before proceeding to analyze Lasmawan’s work and community in Bangah, I introduce a brief history and comparative framework of performing arts pedagogy for foreigners in Bali.

6.1 Teaching Gamelan to Non-Balinese in Bali

Individual researchers and students of music and culture have now been coming to Bali since Colin McPhee’s day—by this point, almost eighty years. While McPhee settled down in the village for months, living closely with his Balinese neighbors for months and years before, today, students can arrange to spend any amount of time living and studying in Bali through a number of institutions and private teachers. In tourist areas, even hotel signs may offer available, on-site lessons that a student can take for an hour or two while on vacation:

![Fig. 6.1 Dance lesson sign in Ubud](image)
The option of individual lessons—arranged through another teacher or friend, contracted through a hotel, or scouted on one’s own upon arrival—are still options that many students pursue. However, the creation of facilities and programs to teach large groups of students, independently or as part of an academic visit, are a more recent development—one that arose as more foreigners in general became interested in learning gamelan music, and in particular, large groups from pre-established American gamelans wishing to study together. A number of different organizations—what a friend lovingly calls “gamelan camps,” as opposed to traditional summer camps—have emerged to fulfill these needs; I describe several below in order to give a sense of the history and different types of study available.

The first of these large-scale programs was that at Flower Mountain, sponsored by the Center for World Music. The Center, founded in 1963 San Francisco by Dr. Robert E. Brown, began to host summer study abroad programs for its students in 1971. The program at Flower Mountain in the village of Payangan, Gianyar, was one of the initial programs, taking place at Brown’s Balinese home, which has subsequently been expanded to accommodate housing and teaching larger numbers of students. The site hosts a three-week program every year—two weeks of intensive arts study, one optional week of touring in Java—with set dates and a set fee. The precise schedule for learning differs yearly, but includes classes on traditional Javanese, Balinese, and Sundanese gamelan and dance as well as lessons in theatrical forms and Indonesian language. There are five types of gamelan on the premises; others may be rented for group study. Students, who live at the compound, are divided into small study groups to learn the materials. The yearly program may consist either of individuals who have never before met, or may be comprised primarily of student members of a single college or university gamelan group. The site is also available at other times for musical or other types of workshops and retreats (Center for World Music website, Flower Mountain website).

Gamelan Çudamani offers similarly organized workshops from their compound in Pengosekan, Gianyar, just outside of Ubud. The program, which has continued to grow and develop since its initial years in the 2000s, also offers a two- to three- week program with set dates, fees, and curriculum. Students live in a hotel situated between the more
quiet village of Pengosekan and the more busy town of Ubud, traveling to the Çudamani compound each day to take lessons, which are either focused on Balinese gamelan (semaradana or gong kebyar) and dance, and taught by a number of local Balinese musicians and dancers who travel between students, fixing each individuals’ posture or notes. Electives in other Balinese performing, visual, or cultural arts and field trips to local sites of interest fill out the schedule. The study program is more often populated by individuals or small groups from affiliated foreign institutions, such as UCLA or Gamelan Sekar Jaya,\textsuperscript{33} than full academic groups.

Foreign students of the Indonesian performing arts who are enrolled at institutions of higher education across the world have long had access to six-month or yearlong courses of study at the Indonesian institutions of higher education, including arts conservatories, through the Darmasiswa Scholarship. Founded in 1974 by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan) and the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia), the program was initially an ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) initiative, and only opened to accept students from around the world in the 1990s. With “crash courses” in Indonesian language before the beginning of each study period, the Darmasiswa enrolls performing arts students directly at the conservatories, giving the same type of classroom education and amount of support as to regular Indonesian students.

Since the founding of the Darmasiswa scholarship, other formal and informal opportunities to study with conservatory instructors have emerged for foreign students. The Bali Module for the World, supported by ISI-Denpasar and the University of Essex, England, is a semi-autonomous organization directed by Dr. I Nyoman Sedana. Based in Denpasar, the Module offers set programs for larger, organized groups of students as well as private lessons for individuals, all instructed by ISI faculty or affiliate teachers. Although the students are not taught at ISI with Indonesian fellow students, the Denpasar

\textsuperscript{33} The ties between these American groups and Çudamani have been especially strong in recent years. Emiko Saraswati Susilo and Pak Dewa Putu Berata have been the guest director and artist, respectively, of Gamelan Sekar Jaya for the last three years; Susilo’s mother, Judy Mitoma, is the founder and the director of the UCLA Center for Intercultural Performance.
setting and independently arranged accommodations evokes some of the feel of living in the city.

Many Balinese performing arts teachers who both work primarily in Bali (such as I Ketut Kodi) and those who work primarily in the United States (including Asnawa, Wenten, and more recently, Bandem) will host individuals or pairs of students at their homes, teaching dance or private lessons on single instruments. Because these relationships for the most part are pre-established, students and teachers together generally decide on what the program will be, when to practice, what payment for lessons will be, and other practical aspects of the students’ study.

Lasmawan, in hosting a few to a large number of students who he knows personally for the most part, combines a number of different aspects of these previously-described programs. His unique choices in creating what he considers to be an ideal learning environment for teaching Balinese gamelan and dance to his foreign students, and how they affect both his students and his home community of Bangah, is the subject of this chapter.

6.2 The “Real” Bali: Bangah as Normative Balinese Experience

Central to Lasmawan’s goal in bringing students to his village, Bangah, was the opportunity for them to have a “real” (or as Putu termed it, an “authentic”) Balinese experience. This concern—the search for the “real”—is commonplace in Balinese studies. Following the rise of the tourist industry in Bali in the post-World War II era, it became a common trope amongst tourists and scholars alike to want to find the “real” Bali: a storied place where the tiny dirt roads took one past verdant sawah and untouched jungles filled with chattering monkeys towards the villages where a harmonious society of beautiful people made incessant offerings of flowers and fruits, music and dance to the gods at the islands’ thousands of temples.34

So consistently has this trope been presented—through the photography of the early twentieth century, the classic anthropological writings of the 1920s-1960s, and more recently through books and films such as Eat, Pray, Love (2010)—that another trope has emerged in written works: to first ask in dramatic fashion “what happened to the ‘real’ Bali” before presenting a more complex picture of the island and its culture, nuanced by the realities of

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34 Many works on Bali published between the 1920s and the 1970s contain passages falling into this category. A particularly illustrative sample set can be found in Adrian Vickers’ Bali: A Paradise Created (Vickers 2012).
modern life. This trope seems especially common in books by scholars of music, perhaps because the cultural advertisement of Bali is still most strong through the arts.

Lisa Gold introduces the concept early in her textbook *Music in Bali: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (Gold 2005). She recounts her arrival in Bali in 1981: a smog-choked *bemo* (minibus) ride through dizzying throngs of people and vehicles. Most distressing was the village of Mas, known for its mask-carvers and other arts, where “signs in English, clearly aimed at the tourist market, masked whatever lay behind them” (Gold 2005: xvii). For Gold, it was a gradual study of arts and culture in the village of her teacher, I Nyoman Wenten, and the realization and admission that “the more I learned, the more I realized how little I understood” (Gold 2005: xviii) that allowed Bali to become “real.”

Michael Bakan had employed a similar strategy in his book *Music of Death and New Creation: Experiences in the World of Balinese Gamelan Beleganjur* (Bakan 1999) half a decade before. Without even establishing a paradise ideal to dash to pieces, Bakan instead begins with an anecdote of his own harrowing experience of nearly being smashed to pieces while body-surfing at Seminyak beach, north of the tourist haunts of Kuta. From there, he continues by offering up an extensive list of personal trials and tribulations confronted during his final visit to Bali in 1995:

The body-surfing incident, the dog bite, a severe illness brought on by food poisoning, implication in a bitter feud between my two teachers, and daily reminders of a great romance that had bloomed in Bali back in 1989 and was now dying in a failed marriage back home had drained my energy and left me unsure of just where I stood relative to this fascinating place that had been such an important part of my life these last six-plus years (Bakan 1999: 4.)

Bakan next proceeds into a more specific list of social ills that had becoming increasingly problematic within the lives of his close Balinese friends and colleagues during the intervening years from his first visit to Bali in 1989 to his last in 1995—“alcoholism, family dysfunction, poverty, disease, and consequences of political corruption, problems that had previously been either hidden from my view or somehow obscured by the haze of romantic illusion” (Bakan 1999:4). For Bakan, writing about his experiences—trying to contextualize what had happened to himself and his friends—was the only way to make sense of Bali in its complex reality.

The foregone conclusion—“that there is no single ‘real’ Bali”—seemed obvious to the students and other visitors who came by Lasmawan’s compound to study and play music. Some,
like Michael Fitts, even acknowledged the complex and often messy set of interpersonal and inter-locational arguments that exist just beneath the surface of Balinese society. These observations and acknowledgements were surely in part fueled by personal experience but also these recent texts with which modern students of gamelan are as familiar, if not more so, than the texts of the 1930s that provided a baseline for students of Balinese culture through the 1990s. Luke, who brought several monographs on Bali with him to read on the trip, including Tenzer’s new second edition of *Balinese Gamelan Music* (2012) and Bakan’s *Music of Death and New Creation* (1999), stated that he liked Bakan’s book the best of those he had read so far *because* it was so bluntly personal in its disarming of the legendary Balinese charm, all while exploring the fascinating world of beleganjur music.

While many of the other students at the compound were not as well read, they also seemed to have no issue with envisioning a Bali that contained both elaborate temple ceremonies and trash heaps (although the guided lifestyle of the compound kept them relatively isolated from the latter of the two). Several of them attributed this to having learned about Balinese gamelan culture in the United States; learning about this foreign culture within their home context, which had its own problems, made the two compatible.

Perhaps more importantly, these students had grown up in a world where, through the internet, they could consume culture and talk to people from all over the world—and realize that foreign places were just as complex as their American homes. It was not distressing but rather amusing for them to find knock-off Spongebob Squarepants toys at the “traditional” markets, completely natural to witness their new Balinese friends from the village checking Facebook on their cellphones. Social networking and consumerism, among other forces, had made the world small. The discovery that Tanah Lot—one of the most famous, beautiful, and important sea temples in Bali—was surrounded by an extensive tourist trap was simply par for the course. Interpreted through their own lenses of experience, Bali could present a different, equally true reality to individual students.

However, the idea of simply accepting “my personal experience as the ‘real’” is problematic within an endeavor that is explicitly supposed to be pedagogical. After all, if one were to interpret the personal experiences of the protagonist of *Eat, Pray, Love* as an accurate representation of Bali, it would be an island full of rice paddies, mystic priests who tell love fortunes, and hot middle-aged Australians—no gamelan music, no temple ceremonies. While
understanding the “reality” of Bali was important for students to interpret events that might seemingly conflict in terms of being sacred and profane, free and commercial, idyllic and problem-ridden, it also seemed important for students to not only get the *Eat, Pray, Love* version, but also to get a taste of the “authentic” Bali.

The word “authenticity” has a fraught history within ethnomusicological and anthropological discourse, just as much if not more so than the idea of the “real.” In terms of this discussion, I use the word “authentic” to mean traditional culture writ broadly: the events, lifestyles, and values that have been central to Balinese Hindu cultures across the decades and among the varying village and urban contexts in Bali. Some examples of the “authentic” Bali could include temple ceremonies, cremations, household structures, certain types of food, praying in certain ways for certain occasions, etc. The use of the word “authentic” here is not meant to suggest that these cultural earmarks are unchanging or the only important cultural forces in Bali—simply that “authentic Balinese practices,” as may be interpreted by differently by different individuals, that are important for students of Balinese culture and music to understand.

In contrast, for the sake of this discussion, I employ the more fractured version of “reality” as described in the recent ethnomusicological writings above: the conscious realization that the “authentic” in Bali is an ever-changing and subjective concept and that influences but is not the only factor in the construction of modern Balinese life ways. Drawing on John L. Jackson’s concept of sincerity, I additionally suggest that the creation of the “real” in Bali has more to do with relationships between individuals embodying different Balinese culture than it does the particular presentation of cultural objects themselves.

In terms of teaching traditional Balinese repertoire to American students in Bali, creating an “authentic” experience, one that presented the correct cultural objects and experiences, was very important to Lasmawan—after all, the students were there to learn about Balinese music and dance in its home context, not to party on Kuta Beach. However, the goal of authentic experience was one that had to be balanced both with logistical concerns while also contextualizing the “authentic” within the broader “reality” of Bali. Here, I discuss how Lasmawan attempts to present an experience that is authentic, real, and logistically feasible for

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35 My informants would often use these words interchangeably or have other ways of expressing these broader concepts.
his visiting students. I contrast these methods to other ways that students can study traditional
music and dance in Bali, and examine how Lasmawan’s choices reveal his own personal vision
of what is important in Balinese culture.

Bangah is a logical place for Lasmawan to host students, since it is his home village. However, there are also other benefits to choosing that particular site. Despite recent issues in
keeping a full complement of gamelan musicians in the primary village ensemble, Bangah is
culturally and musically significant within the context of its neighboring villages. Bangah serves
as the patron village of the Teratai Bang temple, a significant location in that it commemorates
the start of the water flow from the mountains to the villages. In addition to performing at
ceremonies in Bangah and at the Teratai Bang temple, because Bangah has stronger musical
resources than its neighboring villages, the Bangah gong will also play for ceremonial events in
the immediate area. The performing arts may not constitute the livelihoods of most people from
Bangah; however, by playing at these local temple ceremonies, students become an integral part
of their Balinese communities, functionally performing nyagah (ritual good deeds) in nearly all
of their performances.

The functionality of student performances is also a notable aspect of the study experience
in Bangah. Because almost all of the pieces that the gamelan musicians learn are meant not only
to be transplanted to gamelan programs in the United States, but also serve a practical function
within the village, ensures that students are learning “real” repertoire of a type that is used and
appreciated in the area. To learn more contemporary performance forms, students must travel
elsewhere—most of the villagers seem to have relatively little use for musik kontemporer, or the
flashier gerak (choreography) premiered each year at the Bali Arts Festival. However, in
working towards performing with Balinese musicians and dancers, students not only contribute
to the community’s artistic well-being, but also are able to get a firsthand sense of what that
means for the village. Lasmawan explains:

In terms of Tabanan, the big region Tabanan, our group here has never played for
the Bali Arts Festival, because, the first one, the concept of the Bali Arts Festival
is not connected with our society here because we’d rather perform for the temple
ceremony than perform for the Bali Arts Festival, actually. In terms of the quality,
we still use the gamelan to play for god ceremonies.

So, last year, the government of Tabanan contacts me, “Could you organize your
group to play for the Bali Arts Festival?” And I cannot say no and I cannot say
yes, you know, because the village decides that. In other words, like I said, we’d
rather play for the temple ceremony than for the Bali Arts Festival because—
including my group from Colorado now, you know, they don’t want to play again
there too. Because they play there and they feel bad, you know, because after the
concert, all the dignitaries are gone, and nobody cares, you know, who you are.
But we have a lot of reports from the newspaper, the magazine, you know
(Lasmawan 2012b.)

In a sense, then, since Lasmawan respects his village in terms of whether or not to bring
any of his groups to play, it suggests that the members of his sanggar—foreign and local alike—
do constitute a part of the village. As opposed to the lack of community feeling or “connection,”
that Lasmawan feels in playing at the larger venues around Denpasar, he sees great potential for
students and community members to connect at the local temple ceremonies, despite the
language barrier:

Every time we play—I think every time we have sixty members—so we play
beleganjur, all the members combined from the village, we have a ceremonial
thing. Close to a thousand people are watching. That kind of thing, most of my
guests think is better than in Denpasar. Because in Denpasar, my guests see after
they play, there’s just no connection. So if we play in the temple, after we play,
you know, everybody’s like “Oooo, we want to take a photo with you, we want to
take a photo with you, with the turis (tourists).” It’s crowded, and almost
everybody looks happy, and everybody enjoys their time, you know (Lasmawan
2012b.)

The location of Bangah more generally is something that Lasmawan also advocates as
being conducive to student learning. Because the village is a little isolated, up in the mountains
among the rice fields, he notes that it is “Not too crowded, like in Ubud, you know? And not too
hot, and no mosquito”—important aspects to what he considers to be more comfortable living
conditions. He adds, however, “The one thing I would say, the only thing we need here—it’s a
little bit far from Denpasar, from Bali Arts. But I don’t know if you want to go to Bali Arts every
day. So maybe if you have a three-week program [like the students who come to study often do],
three or four times to Bali Arts, that’s ok! Three times is going to be more than enough because
you know the situation already” (Lasmawan 2012b).

The students staying in the compound are generally fairly isolated from daily Balinese
life, whether urban or rural. However, this is the case at any of the Balinese arts study locations
that are structured for groups of students to come and learn for many hours per day. As the
students noted above, staying at Lasmawan’s compound feels truly like staying with a family,
despite the often-large number of non-Balinese “houseguests.” The students are not expected to partake in the daily household chores; yet, the Balinese food and the cold showers give the students a small taste of Balinese village life. Additionally, the continual visits by the women in the gamelan, Lasmawan’s relatives, and the other guests provide more of an atmosphere of a traditional family home than staying in hotel rooms or at a location isolated from the village.

Just as the students start to become accustomed to the rhythm of life in the village, the villagers—at least in Bangah—have become accustomed to the presence and participation of the foreigners within their temple ceremonies and other important occasions. In the neighboring villages, however, the foreign students are still a welcome surprise. Lasmawan recalls his perspective of a 2011 performance at the Beratan Lake temple:

They were laughing at foreigners dancing—they were surprised! All of the dancers are so big! The first one [piece that they played], all of the dancers are kids, so, the second time, three times the size! So they are just surprised. So especially in this area, they never see the tourists perform. Maybe in Denpasar, or in Gianyar…but in this area, it’s our guests are the most they can see that. They’re always excited (Lasmawan 2012b)

Within Bangah itself, Lasmawan’s active work in the village, despite his physical absence for much of the year, has allowed him to maintain a say in the musical life of the village. His students—generally respectful in their manners and serious in their performances—are often specifically welcomed when they perform, smiled at by villagers who they do not know and greeted warmly by those that they do. Although they are often still referred to by the locals as “turis,” Lasmawan’s guests have earned a recognized place within the life of the village, if only temporarily.

The perception of the students as “turis,” however, might be more accurate than a lot of the students would like to think. Aleanna was not alone in stating “I think that we’re doing it is very different from like a tourist approach;” Elizabeth Macy recalls of her first trip to Bangah as an undergraduate student:

Living in the village, my classmates and I spent our early days in Bali immersed in music, dance, and culture. We woke with the roosters, ate with our hands, went to the temple to pray, and grew accustomed to the squat toilets and cold baths (via washbasins and ladles). When we ventured out of the village (in our chauffeured [sic] vans) to visit tourist sights, we collectively scoffed at the “real” tourists—we didn’t belong to the same mold, our experiences were somehow more valid, more “authentic” (Macy 2010: 49).
Macy contextualizes her and her classmates’ experiences as a form of tourism, and they do indeed embody the other definition of “turis,” which is “visitor.” However, this form of educational tourism does entail significant differences than the “regular” kind. Although a student at Lasmawan’s compound might indeed spend some time while in Bali gawking at the monkeys, sunning at the beach, or shopping in Ubud, they come home to an adopted family, often one whose members (Lasmawan, Ketut, and their sons) the student has already known for some time. The students’ passports are generally stamped with the Indonesian government’s thirty-day tourist visas, often on arrival; however, their purpose for stay is one that, were the students seeking to stay up to two months, might fall also under another category: the renewable social-budaya visa (social-cultural visa), to be used “to visit family/relative, social or cultural exchange, etc” (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia website 2013).

Bangah, like any other location on Bali, is merely one facet of a larger, more complicated whole. Having students live in the village and perform primarily for the temples could arguably constitute a “more real” Balinese learning experience than others; for the students who choose to stay and study with Lasmawan, it represents if nothing else a vantage point where they feel comfortable and welcomed in learning about Bali, its music, and its culture. It is from this vantage point that they can explore other facets of Bali’s culture, from the Bali Arts Festival to tourist performances in Ubud, from the monkey forest to Kuta Beach. Putu recalls:

When I was younger, he wouldn’t let students that he took to Bali, like, he would advise against going to like Kuta or something, these party-heavy cities in Bali because of their reputations—which makes sense, but he was just like, “No, you’re not going to do that.” And now, now…a few years back when he just gave me money to go buy booze or something, or took some of his students to Kuta to party or something…yeah, he’s getting more relaxed. Well, I wouldn’t say more relaxed, just realizing that it’s not the worst thing to let these kids go party in small doses is ok (Hiranmayena 2013.)

Although a trip to Kuta may become part of a student’s memories of Bali, it is generally the sincere connections between people that are cited by both Lasmawan and his students as most important to truly introducing the students to Bali. From Lasmawan’s perspective, this is why the students generally perform in the temple ceremonies; it is not that a performance at the Bali Arts Festival is not “authentic” Balinese culture, but it is perhaps less sincerely Balinese. Correspondingly, when students cited what they appreciated most about living in the village as
opposed to staying in more touristic locations, it was the sense of having family, friends, a home; it was the interaction between people, their cultural priorities, and their willingness to share culture on an individual level that made their visits to Bali “real.” Although studying gamelan and dance is certainly a large part of learning about authentic Balinese culture, it is perhaps the building of relationships in the learning process that constitutes the “real” Bali.

6.3 Recreating Bali in the United States

I can almost hear Lasmawan’s students and the Balinese community members laughing and talking from outside his duplex in a quiet neighborhood of Colorado Springs. Removing my shoes, I enter the front door, walking into a living room that is already crowded with people. Every inch of the couches—mostly Indonesian-style, with carved hardwood frames and upholstered seats that are nearly as hard—is covered in gamelan players and dancers. They are finishing up their meals, a variety of traditional Balinese dishes that Ketut once again has insisted on preparing by herself. There is still a pot of rice and some leftovers sitting on the kitchen table; I grab a plate and heap it high with rice, potatoes, jackfruit, and chicken.

Heading to the kitchen for some hot water to make tea, I pass by the pantry, which holds not food, but dance costumes. Although some of the bigger costumes (such as the barong) are stored at the university, most of them reside here. Stacks upon stacks of labeled, clear-plastic tubs fill the shelves with hats and other accessories perched precariously on top. My tea water boils; I make a cup and return to the living room to join the chatter.

As the party thins out an hour later, I retire to the one American-style couch. On the wall across from me, a flat screen television blares a sports channel; between Lasmawan’s love of golf and his sons’ love of soccer, the ESPN networks seem to get a lot of play in the house. On the wall to my right in the corner hangs a plangkiran that houses small items of devotional interest. Below, on a small table, sit the offerings: fruit and flowers and the remnants of a stick of incense, which has long burnt out since it was lit earlier in the morning. In addition to these items, daily household offerings usually contain some money—in Bali, either a small amount of rupiah or old Chinese coins. On top of this offering sits a single American dollar.

For most of the students Lasmawan teaches in music classrooms across the Rocky Mountain region, his words, his stories, his teachings in gamelan rehearsals are their first
exposure to Balinese culture. As Dorothy noted, even Lasmawan’s presence “adds that authenticity to their [the students’] experience.” But what type of “authenticity” does he add? As Ricardo D. Trimillos discusses in his essay “Subject, Object, and the Ethnomusicology Ensemble: The Ethnomusicological ‘We’ and ‘Them,’” this type of authenticity as a native musician—a “culture-bearer”—is assumed to embody cultural knowledge as a cultural “insider.” Trimillos also notes that “A second type of authenticity concerns the phenotypic; the culture bearer looks the native. Visual credibility figuratively colors the reception of the knowledge delivered and performances mounted. There is an often unarticulated assumption that performance supervised by a culture bearer will be closer to the original, more authentic” (Trimillos 2004: 38). These sentiments are congruent with Dorothy’s descriptions of the students’ reactions: seeing Lasmawan, knowing that he is from Bali, gives particular relevance to what he says and teaches.

But in what ways is what Lasmawan says and teaches “Balinese,” in what ways not? In The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-One Issues and Concepts, Bruno Nettl identifies “the participation in non-canonic ensemble sponsored by academic institutions, a practice begun in the United States in the 1950s and widely adopted in Canada and western Europe as part of the educational system”—i.e., world music ensembles—as “fieldwork at home” (Nettl 2005: 192). However, he calls in to question exactly what musical culture the students are observing. He addresses the question through the example of gamelan (in this case, Javanese, the most prevalent type at American academic institutions through the 1990s):

The participant looking at a gamelan rehearsal from the perspective of a fieldworker may be obliged to note questions such as the authenticity of the repertory and the learning process. (For example: Does the gamelan teacher use the techniques he would use at home when instructing Americans? Do the students observe the traditional social organization, personally and musically, of a Javanese gamelan?) Study, rehearsal, and performance in musics of the “other” at home can be seen as a certain type of fieldwork. But it’s a complicated matter: Is one learning about, say, Javanese musical culture, or about the American musical culture of one’s home institution? (Nettl 2005: 193)

Fieldwork aside, the questions are still interesting ones in thinking about the educational experiences that Lasmawan’s American students receive in their home gamelan groups—if only because, in large part, the answers might be seen to turn older ideas of authenticity and “insider-outsider” aesthetics on their head. Does Lasmawan use the same techniques in the United States
as he does at home (in Bali)? According to his students, yes—but his primary teaching responsibilities in both America and in Bali are teaching foreign students. He teaches the women’s group differently, but still within the same range of pedagogical techniques and repertoire as he would use for a group of new students in America.36

Do the students observe the traditional social organization, personally and musically, of a [Balinese] gamelan? To some degree, yes; they are taught about Balinese culture, how to respect the instruments, and how the instruments function together. But a group of American students will never be a group of Balinese students. They are encultured with different ideas about musical performance, about religion, about gender, about institutions and authority and family and any other number of issues than would be students of the same age and stage in Bali.

The real crux of the matter, however, lies in perceptions of the word “home.” For a man who, for over twenty years, has spent ten months a year in the United States and two months a year in Bali (and prior to that, lived in Java for ten years)—for a man such as that, where is “home?” Although they are learning anew, and from many different America-based cultural perspectives, his students are learning within the same ensembles where he is teaching his own sons—is that not an “authentic” musical lineage? And when foreigners play for the temple ceremonies in Bangah, as they have almost every year for over ten years, who is the outsider? Is it the tall, blond American college student who marches uphill from one temple to the next with the group of beleganjur musicians for an hour, rarely missing a note of his newly-learned reyong part? Although this student may be a cultural outsider, his continued study of gamelan music, his active presence within important aspects of village life makes him at least temporarily part of the community and an “authentic” part of Balinese musical life.

What Lasmawan teaches to his foreign students is not the gamelan music and culture of Bali. It never could be. There is no one culture of Bali. Indeed, the multifaceted, polyvocal world that is Balinese gamelan music is constantly changing—being shaped by Lasmawan and his non-Balinese students, among many others in Bali and abroad. Is the American gamelan experience “authentic?” Lasmawan would probably laugh at the question. Music and culture are not a question of being “authentic” or “inauthentic,” “inside” or “outside.” Like everything else,
learning and experience are all about “desa, kala, patra,” taking the right approach for the right situation.

6.4 Lasmawan on his Teaching

Although Lasmawan has now taught primarily American students for over twenty years in a community that has now grown to include a large number of gamelans and individual students, he started small at his first job at San Diego State University. At the time, the university had a vast holding of different gamelans: angklung, gong kebyar, and full Javanese gamelan.

“Very complete, you know,” Lasmawan commented. However, working with the American students at the beginning was very different from working with the Javanese students. Lasmawan recalls:

The beginning is sometimes different because when I taught the Javanese people, they already knew some of the technique and most of the sounds they are familiar with. But when I started teaching in San Diego, it was very slow…students were slow to pick up, you know. I can tell you, in one semester, we only study one piece: “Tabuh Telu.” [He laughs]. And still, then we do maybe “Tabuh Telu” and “Panyembragina.” But when we perform, still some of them make mistakes, you know (Lasmawan 2013.)

In large part, helping the students to learn the new musical styles involved teaching them to listen in a new way—and also to take the works at a pace that the students could learn and understand. After a few semesters at San Diego state, Lasmawan noted:

So, from that time, so I try to move my strategy, you know, just try to learn slowly—apa [what]?—teaching slowly, part by part, over and over, you know. And try to make it slow, you know, because different students in different cultures have different—what do you call it?—techniques that they are able to do it, very different than in Java, you know” (Lasmawan 2013.)

Despite these early frustrations, Lasmawan has hit his stride in terms of teaching gamelan, especially in terms of conducting a large number of groups with different levels of performers and pedagogical needs. He says:

So now it’s getting better—now, you know, it’s a lot better. Because at that time I forget about technique, you know, hand movement or whatever, so now I think it’s more organized. So now they’re able to perform up to eight pieces, you know. That was very hard, the beginning teaching at San Diego State, you know; very slow…Yeah, I’ve gotten more used to American students and develop my strategy—knowing how different the quality of the students are—if they’re slow, I make it slow, I make a simple piece; but if they’re good, I can teach a harder piece, a harder technique (Lasmawan 2013.)
The theme of adaptability in pedagogy fits in squarely with the Balinese concept “desa, kala, patra”—one that is very close to Lasmawan’s heart. Additionally, however, it seems to fit in particularly well with American institutional conceptions of the role of a world music ensemble: to educate about music and culture, but not always achieve specific technical benchmarks of performance.

In terms of the class, you follow the syllabus, you know, in Bali or in Java, they follow the syllabus. They know, “Oh, this semester, they’re going to study ‘Tabuh Telu,’ this semester we’re going to play this piece,” you know. But here, we don’t have to put the name of the piece. It’s flexible, you know, meaning that we can adjust the repertory according to the quality of the student (Lasmawan 2013.)

Although Lasmawan adjusts the individual pieces that he teaches to each ensemble depending on the students’ abilities, he does not generally change the core of the overall repertoire. Almost all of the pieces that he teaches are standard Balinese gamelan repertoire, with the exception of new pieces that he has composed in traditional forms. Most of them are dance pieces drawn from the gamelan gong kebyar repertoire, which for at least the last twenty years has been the most popular throughout the island. Additionally, although his own knowledge of Balinese gamelan repertoire is vast, Lasmawan will often teach the same pieces to his different groups, both in Bali and in the United States.

There are several logical reasons for this. These pieces—through being consistently requested for local or tourist performances, being taught at the conservatories, and programmed as standard repertoire at the Bali Arts Festival—have achieved the status of “standards.” Like the cab driver who I met on my first trip to Bali who was able to whistle the opening line of “Manuk Rawa,” musicians and non-musicians alike throughout the island, particularly those in less isolated areas, are familiar with all of these works. By learning pieces from the Balinese gamelan “canon” rather than pieces or exercises specifically written to teach foreigners, students are able to both learn how to play and become more musically literate.

Although Lasmawan was deeply involved with the musik kontemporer scene in Solo in the 1980s and still does write works for his different groups that are outside traditional forms and instrumentations for gamelan compositions—for example, the piece for various gamelan instruments and bowed piano that the Colorado College bowed piano ensemble performed at the college’s anniversary celebration for the gamelan—the majority of his own works that he writes
for gamelan are based on traditional forms. In addition to being able to continue his passion for composition, these pieces are designed to teach the students important elements of technique, musical form, and ensemble cohesion (see the analysis of “Sumiar” in Chapter Four).

One might raise the question: why teach standardized pieces in Bangah, a Balinese village that has its own distinct historical versions of many traditional pieces? One answer is that some of those pieces are considered to be sacred; teaching them on non-temple instruments and playing them for anything but temple functions would be disrespectful. However, there is possibly another reason as well. At one of the temple ceremonies celebrated in Bangah during the summer of 2012, I was sitting on a next to Ed, one of Lasmawan’s students from when he had taught in San Diego in the early 1990s. We were craning our necks to see over the crowds of villagers who had gathered to watch the Bangah gamelan perform. They were just starting a new piece, “Rejang Dewa,” and all of the young girls dressed in yellow and white had begun to process out into the courtyard. Ed turned to me and said, “I wonder: why they are playing this piece? The village has this gorgeous ‘Rejang,’ I heard it the first time that I was here.” For reasons that were never fully clarified to me, the village itself had ceased to play some of the local versions of traditional repertoire. While the performance of “Baris Gede” was still performed to a melody that was affiliated with Bangah, the “Rejang” melody was no longer being performed. Students who joined in with the Bangah group later to fill in the instruments of the gamelan were able to learn some of this repertoire on the fly, but for now, not as a part of their regular lessons.

Finally, Lasmawan’s choice to teach primarily from the same repertoire is a practical one. In working with so many groups, having some consistency and repetition helps in his own teaching. He says, “In ISI-Solo, the teaching is not hard, the teaching Balinese [music to the Javanese students.] In teaching a Balinese course in ISI-Solo, we have like 15-20 people, it’s only a small amount of your time, not like here, you know (where Lasmawan may teach as many as 150 distinct students at once)” (Lasmawan 2013). Playing these standard works allows students to learn repertoire that they would be able to perform if playing with other gamelan groups, both in Bali and in the United States, and only have to adapt to the subtle stylistic characteristics that would differ depending on the group director and his aesthetic background and vision. This musical “transfer” includes students who have sat in with or joined another of Lasmawan’s groups in America; by teaching the same set of standards to all of his student
groups, Lasmawan is able to maintain a musical and stylistic core between them, despite the
groups being located in different places and performing on different types of gamelans.

While the concept of musical lineage is important and the teacher-student bond is one
that is recognized both socially and musically, Lasmawan does not worry about his students
studying with other teachers, or learning from multiple teachers—after all, that was his approach
to learning gamelan. He recognizes that there are different concepts to be learned from each
person. He says,

So, if they want to study in Ubud with Pak Dewa Berata or in Pengosekan, it’s
fine, so he’s my friend. If they want to study in Denpasar with Pak Windha or Pak
Subandí or Pak Asnawa, or whoever, it’s fine. The teachers have different
characters, they have different personalities. Like myself! I study with my teacher
in Denpasar, Singaraja, Karangansem, and in Java, same—the best teacher in
central Java, Yoga, Surakarta—so in terms of the study, it’s fine you know.
Whoever you want to study with is fine (Lasmawan 2012b.)

However, from his perspective, it is important for students and teachers to avoid comparisons
between teachers and groups that cast one in a more positive light than another. He reminds me:

The most important thing that I tell my students in America: you never tell your
student that one style is better than another. That’s very wrong. For example, if
you study gender in Sukawati, you never tell your student that gender in Sukawati
is better than any other gender in Bali. So, some groups in America say that but
that is wrong to me because I never tell my student like that. For example, “Oh,
‘Teruna Jaya’ is better in Singaraja than in Denpasar.” So, you never tell your
students like that. Because style, and time—what we call “desa, kala, patra” in
Bali, time, situation, and condition, make a different quality. So, meaning—it’s
not “Sukawati is better than Tabanan”, or “Gianyar is better than Singaraja,” just
a different time, a different situation.

So that’s the most important thing to teach American people, American students,
because Americans always try to find “the best one.” You know, “Who’s the
best? Who’s the best?” Like Sekar Jaya, they claim themselves as “the best
gamelan group in America”—that’s wrong to me, you know? How can you say
one gamelan group is “the best in America”? How about Tunas Mekar? How
about Pak Asnawa’s group? How about Pak Suadin’s group? We do not use
words “the best”; we use words “different style, different situation”; different
groups, different communities—they are different (Lasmawan 2013.)

Other than his concern a potentially competitive spirit between Balinese gamelan groups
and the teachers who work most often with foreigners, Lasmawan is most concerned that
teachers be willing to pass on all of their knowledge to their students—to be able to give as much
as the student can handle, to pass down their knowledge and skills, really with the hope that the student is able to eventually surpass the teacher.

Some people, they do not teach their students 100%. Because they don’t want their student better than them, you know? But that to me is wrong. In our philosophy, what you have, you share with other people. So it’s ok if your student is better than you in some point, but the meaning of the teacher is actually for opening…open the students’ minds. You don’t have to make a—what do you call it?—you don’t have to block the knowledge of your student. That’s very important, because even in America, some of the professors, they don’t want to teach their students 100%, you know. That is wrong.

That’s the most important, you know. It’s not every teacher who wants to give 100% to their students. But I’m not that kind of teacher. My philosophy of a teacher is to open students’ minds, to open a student to learn more. Of course when the student learns more, they’re going to be better than the teacher, but the student’s going to be able to respect how to—apa?—how their teacher has opened their mind, you know. So when I mention about the word “pembuka”—it is the opening (of a book or a musical piece)—but also the similar meaning “Pemberantasan Buta Karawitan” [how to act and respond to the teacher; the eradication of blindness about karawitan, traditional music] (Lasmawan 2013.)

Since he came to the United States in 1990, Lasmawan has taught—“opened the minds”—of hundreds, if not thousands of students. Although some of them may only play for a semester or two, others have made gamelan a significant part of their lives. The continued musical growth of these students—and their own devotion to sharing gamelan with others—forms one final facet of Lasmawan’s teaching philosophy: the quest to educate “the next generation” of Balinese gamelan musicians and audiences.

6.5 The Next Generation

Within Balinese performing arts families, passing one’s knowledge to the next generation is extremely important, if not crucial for those children to follow in their parents’ footsteps. For Lasmawan, this type of transfer from parent to child:

Is part of what we call dharma, dharma of the family [in Hinduism, the upholding of the order of the universe]…it’s still very important to carry out the heritage [for this next] generation. But it’s not necessary for you to choose that as the way of your life. For example, if your son wants to be a police officer, or teacher, or business, it’s still ok, but at the same time, you should still teach dancing and play gamelan.
Musical knowledge is often passed down through the male members of the family, often from father to son or uncle to nephew. However, variations on this pattern have started to emerge in recent years. With the rise of women’s gamelans, fathers and uncles are starting to teach their daughters as well as their sons how to play (Susilo 2003: 49). In addition to teaching members of the family or the village community, the rise of the conservatory system and the migration of teachers to work in other locations leave a pedagogical legacy that extends far beyond the family tree.

It is clear to Lasmawan and many of his long-term friends, colleagues, and students that he will one day need a successor if the gamelans are to continue to be active ensembles. The most obvious choices would be amongst his children: Putu Hiranmayena, Adé Bdac, and Aji Guyasa. Putu, the eldest, is in his mid-twenties and is just now beginning a master’s program at San Diego State University; Adé and Aji are in middle school and elementary school, respectively. All three of them grew up playing gamelan; the younger children, still at home, have played in most of their father’s groups, either in a permanent capacity or as “ringers” for the academic groups. Even though Putu is in California, he still flies home for large performance events, retracing the long car routes up into Wyoming and Montana with his father to make the gamelans come to life under the stage lights.

Although gamelan is a central part of their lives, the three boys maintain other hobbies as well. For Adé and Aji, gamelan must primarily compete with soccer for their attention. At my stay at the compound in Bangah in 2012, the two brothers rehearsed with whatever gamelan groups were present, filling in on either gangsa or reyong to complete the complement of musicians. However, when not playing, they would be found clad in shorts and soccer jerseys, kicking the ball around the dusty areas between the buildings—together, or with any other American students or male Indonesian relatives who were around and willing to play. They would get up early or stay up late to watch the European games broadcast on Indonesian TV (soccer is the second most popular sport in Indonesia after badminton); Aji even wandered around wearing a Spain flag wrapped around his shoulders after a particularly hard-fought victory. After gamelan and soccer, chess was their next greatest amusement, the games between the younger brothers, the Americans, or their elder Indonesian “cousins” Daya and Dema providing entertainment for anyone who entered the compound.
Putu no longer returns to Indonesia every summer—summer employment and other creative projects have kept him in the United States about every other year since he started college—but the first time I met him was indeed in Indonesia, in Bangah, the last summer that he went over: 2011. After sunset, we sat with some of the American students on the balé dangin, where the manusa yadnya (life cycle ceremonies) are held and where the gender wayang are stored, kept out under its covers. Several of the students had been learning how to play on this particular trip to Bali. Discovering that I had not yet learned to play, Putu and two of the students launched into “Tulang Lindung” (“Bones of the Eel”), a traditional number to open wayang kulit performances. I sat at the fourth gender, trying to catch the coordination of using a panggul in each hand to hit the suspended keys while damping the key I had just hit with the same hand’s wrist—especially difficult with the piece’s sinuous left-hand part. And then someone broke out the bottle of arak, which vastly increased the difficulty of trying to play the piece. Finally we all gave up; laughing and teasing each other, we put away the gender and pulled out a deck of cards instead.

I had remembered Putu’s quick musical skill and easy-going nature from that evening until I met him in person again, in May 2013; what I had forgotten was his appearance—which had changed a bit over the course of two years. Slender as a rail, he had developed a penchant for wearing tight neon pants with black collared shirts, the distinctive outfit making him easy to spot from a distance. He had grown out his dark black hair into a great curly mane, which swirled around his head in a pleasantly disorderly fashion, and on his upper lip perched a thin, patchy moustache complemented by an equally patchy soul patch. His eyes and mouth were wide and almost always smiling—except for when he was playing, in which case they narrowed in concentration. One of the younger Tunas Mekar members sitting next to me once commented, “He looks like a barong, doesn’t he?” I couldn’t help but agree; he looked like a young barong ket made human.

I was able to talk with Putu on Skype and Facebook in the spring of 2013 and find out what he had been up to in the past two years—which, it had turned out was a lot. After finishing up college, he had worked for a bit and now was going back to school. He was playing lots of gamelan, both as a co-director of the children’s gamelan group at The Museum School in San Diego and in filling in for his father’s performances. He was catching up on his gamelan listening and reading, setting goals for himself to read through the academic English-language
literature on Balinese culture and performing arts—and charting his progress through public posts on Facebook. And finally, he was trying to choose what paths to pursue next in his life. After all, as I (and evidently many other as suggested), with his family music background and future academic study, he could be poised perfectly to become one of the next great ethnomusicologists of Balinese music. He wasn’t yet so sure; although he was currently interested in playing, teaching, and pursuing gamelan, it hadn’t always been that way; in fact, it took him a long time to begin to appreciate his gamelan-playing heritage.

From a young age, for Putu, gamelan was never really a hobby: it “just happened.” Born in Yogyakarta, he moved to the United States with his family when he was about one year old and has spent most of his life in Colorado. He has been learning and playing gamelan ever since he can remember. “There’s a picture of me, about age three, sitting on my dad’s lap while he played gender,” Putu laughed during one of our talks. When he was not too much older, he began to sit in on the rehearsals for his father’s various performance groups. Although he spent his free time in a number of ways—soccer, roller hockey, snowboarding, skateboarding, and chess, among others—playing gamelan, Putu says, gave him “a uniqueness” among his peers, who would come to his performances and learn a bit about Balinese culture through those experiences.

From the beginning, he was placed on gangsa, learning the kotekan patterns, then how they fit in with the colotomic structure of the gong cycle and melodies, then how all of the parts fit together. He still works on the last instrument that students generally learn, the kendang. While he emphasizes that it is the instruments that students should learn to hear first, the challenge of leading through the drum is one that students master last, and is indeed a skill that he is still perfecting. Playing the different parts on the pieces for so long, they became integrated into his brain; he says that he even sometimes plays gamelan in his sleep!

For Putu, gamelan is in large part about community, both musical and social, and has become a metaphor for how he thinks about life. Just as he was learning how to integrate his kotekan part with the other instruments, he was simultaneously growing up, learning how to integrate himself as a part of his broader community—a journey that he emphasizes sharing with his dad, especially during the year in between Lasmawan divorcing Putu’s mother and marrying Ketut. Putu recalls the weekly drives up to Denver and the longer journeys out across the Rockies to Montana, Wyoming, even Idaho and, spending so much time with his father,
watching him also learn better how to teach his American groups, how to be a part of American society. As a young child, Putu says he had placed his father on “this weird pedestal” based on his teaching and behavior; growing older, he was able to understand more that his father “was human” and that he too had his challenges.

As a teenager he became less focused on gamelan; after all, it wasn’t originally “an interest,” but something that was “just there.” He became more interested in listening to and playing other types of music, playing more drum set than gamelan in his spare time and sometimes even sitting in the back of his father’s rehearsals with his headphones on, listening to pop music and doing homework while the gamelan played around him. Through attending college at Colorado College, Putu explored other musical and dramatic avenues other than the Balinese gamelan traditions with which he had grown up. Active in rock bands and local black box theater, among other things, he went into what his friend and quasi-elder brother Ed called “Putu’s mathcore phase.” Mathcore, a type of metalcore (heavy metal), is both dissonant in terms of Western conceptions of melody and harmony as well as being exceptionally rhythmically complex. Although Putu admits that he started listening to it in part as a sort of rebellion, he quickly realized that it in part why he appreciated the genre was that it is “very similar to gamelan.” He says:

That might be because of the intricate rhythms in Balinese gamelan that sort of... when you pick each rhythm or each melody apart, when you’re learning it, there’s just not a lot of room to predict where it’s going. There are just all of these turns and changes. It’s just very pattern-savvy, so once you learn a pattern, you kind of figure out the group vibe or the musical emotion and progress from there and learn a piece or something. So there’s a lot of heavy metal music which I enjoy and I actually like to integrate into guest lectures about gamelan (Hiranmayena 2013)

(He hasn’t quite convinced his father of these similarities yet).

Now, having taken some time off from school, Putu is working with gamelan in San Diego, co-teaching the children’s gamelan there with his “uncle”-one of the first students that his father taught at SDSU—ethnomusicologist Alex Khalil. Putu reflects that in some ways, it is like the family has come full circle. I Madé Lasmawan first taught at San Diego State, invited there by Bob Brown; now, his son is teaching Gamelan Giri Nata (“Mountain Sage”), a children’s world music program at the Museum School—a program that Brown’s Center for World Music helped found. For Putu, this return to gamelan, now in a professional capacity, is part of what he
calls his “cyclical journey back to gamelan.” He says, “When I was younger, I loved pop music…but whenever my dad had rehearsals, I was there, in the gamelan room, doing my homework and listening to something else” (Hiranmayena 2013). Like Balinese children, Putu “inherited” a background in gamelan. However, *choosing* to play gamelan as an adult, like many other college students, gives him a different type of perspective on it. This combined perspective—heritage and choice—gives Putu a perspective that is both unique and resonates with the experiences of both native gamelan musicians and foreigners who are newly learning to play.

Teaching, too, has taught Putu a new perspective on not only his musical heritage, but also his father’s work:

In the teacher’s aid perspective, I’ve kind of being doing that for awhile…since I was very young, just helping out my dad in ensembles, stuff my brothers are doing now, things like that. But the actual teacher vs. student perspective, that’s just been happening since like, last year… I did a little bit of Metro State University in Denver…yeah, I think that was the only one at that time. And then there was San Diego, and, then I ran into a bunch of other gigs (Hiranmayena 2013.)

At the charter school, Putu teaches a number of different classes and levels, working on different difficulties of materials. He starts the children off with technique, then adds in melody, then, later, kotekans, moving the children between the instruments to learn the different parts. His methods in teaching, he notes, in large part resemble his father’s. He says of the experience:

It teaches me how to deal with individual learning processes of these kids within a group setting and how to transfer my teaching philosophies in that way. I would say similarities between my father and I…learning just by doing is definitely one of them, and learning at a fairly fast pace is another—just kind of getting in their ears, doing it over, repetition…not necessarily having to have every little detail, you know, just go with the grain. Because when you’re in an ensemble like this you have the support of your group, and at the same time you have to support your group (Hiranmayena 2013.)

Currently, Putu is also co-teaching with David Harnish at the University of California-San Diego. He notes that Harnish has a “very different way of teaching… his way of teaching is more on the academic side, so, we’ll play like, a phrase, or something, and he’ll explain a bunch of history about it…I’m learning a lot being out here and teaching different groups.” Another
difference is that while Putu tends to emphasize technique first, Harnish tends to work on learning pieces first. The younger teacher says:

“I…agree and don’t agree about…”’cause if you don’t work on your technique, it’s going to be bad later on, and you’re not going to know how it’s supposed to sound when you do get it. On the other hand, it is good to get an actual piece underway… and knowing that whole idea of colotomic structure, and that music in this culture isn’t linear, so…”(Hiranmayena 2013.)

Although he is still developing his philosophies for teaching, Putu notes that he is “learning a lot” and is planning to continue to teach the gamelans for the two years that he will work on his Master’s degree. When I asked him what he wanted to do after that, he laughed. It might be academia, he mused—after all, he had heard on more than one occasion that he could follow in his father’s footsteps, or become an incredible ethnomusicologist. But, as Putu himself suggested (and long-time family members confirmed), it might be that he was better suited for something different, more experimental, that combined all of the arts. All he knew for the moment was that he somehow wanted it to involve playing and teaching gamelan.

I saw Putu again at the celebration for twenty years of gamelan at Colorado College. We had to talk after the event was over; during that Friday and Saturday he was never still, running across the stage to play gangsa, then to drum, then to transform into an entranced kris dancer—filling in wherever necessary to make the event come off. For almost a week after the event, professional photographers and members of the different performing groups posted photos of the performances on Facebook. However, Putu posted a message (see p. 219)—a public reflection in which he tagged over fifty people—that focused not on the performance, as had most of dozens of pictures and status updates that I had seen appear over the last few days.

Putu’s post mixes Balinese words, expressions, and cultural concepts with American colloquialisms and philosophical ideas to express his own exuberantly unique perspective. For those within this segment of the international Balinese gamelan community, however, it all seemed to make perfect sense. He repeats his father’s phrase, “the next generation.” But for Putu, it clearly applies to the whole community of musicians, Indonesian and American; to everyone who learns to play and carries on the culture and tradition.
Fig. 6.2 Putu’s post-concert Facebook post

This concept of who will be “the next generation” was much on the minds of some of the elder members of the Colorado gamelan communities as well. In talking to Levine, she spoke hopefully of having another event that celebrated thirty years of the Colorado College gamelan in 2023. But, she noted, that she and Lasmawan would “both be old” (in their 60s); what would happen to the groups after that point? Fitts noted that “It might be Putu to carry on the tradition, but he has his own path…Tyler, now he has a job up here if he ever wants to take it.” (Fitts 2013) The “next generation” might be someone who has specifically chosen the gamelan, not someone who inherited it by birth.
One night, after we were discussing the lineage of Pak Madé’s teachers, I asked him about the importance of his “next generation;” what did it mean that so many of those people would be non-Balinese Americans? He answered:

That’s fine! Because the concept of gamelan is universal, is not only for [the] Balinese, you know? Not only for [the] Javanese. It is good, you know? A good gamelan player can be from another country…from Canada, from England, or from Japan, or from America, or from Mexico, or from anywhere, because to study gamelan is just like to study other things, if you learn seriously, you get it. I’m okay with that (Lasmawan 2013.)

The “seeds” of Balinese gamelan culture that he has planted so far from Bali in the United States have already begun to grow, to bear fruit, to blossom. While there is no one who could replace Lasmawan as a teacher, the students whose minds he has opened at institutions throughout the American West constitute a new American “branch” of a gamelan lineage whose roots extend back to Bali, through Lasmawan and his teachers before him. Air mengelir. As students take on this knowledge, as a rare few become teachers of gamelan themselves, the tradition will continue to grow. Lasmawan has his next generation.
CHAPTER SEVEN

GAMELAN EDUCATION: INDIVIDUALS AND INSTITUTIONS

Up to this point, this dissertation has focused primarily on describing one particular portion of the transnational Balinese gamelan community—the ensembles that Lasmawan instructs and the individuals within them—as a micro-ecosystem that is in large part populated and maintained by personal and institutional support from within American systems of higher education. This chapter introduces larger historical, economic, and political issues of American-Indonesian transnational musical exchange, situating Lasmawan, his career choices, and the resulting communities within this larger framework.

7.1 The Gamelan-Playing Foreigner: Not So Surprising Anymore

In part, the intertwining of Balinese and specifically American arts institutional and pedagogical worlds has been prompted by the long history of visitors to the island, and ones who were there to take in the cultural arts rather than (like in Java) being stationed there for governmental or trade positions. Colin McPhee was one of the earliest non-Balinese to devote a substantial amount of time to documenting Balinese musical practices beginning in the 1930s. His book *Music in Bali: A Study in Form and Instrumental Organization in Balinese Orchestral Music* (1966) provides one of the most comprehensive theoretical descriptions of Balinese musical genres and style to this day. However, unlike many of his contemporaries, McPhee had to learn Balinese gamelan music to some extent in order to create the extensive transcriptions (all in Western notation) that appear in his works. He describes his learning process as follows:

> For a small sum I could engage the musicians to go through and repeat their traditional repertories of music. Exclamations of pleased surprise would be heard from the men when, after noting some nuclear melody the first time it was played, I sat down at an instrument to play it along with them on the repeat. Work was always a pleasure. Even in the most isolated villages information was given willingly, and rare musical manuscripts of palm leaf were generously offered for my inspection and sometimes even copied at my request. (McPhee 1966: xvi)

Although we have already touched on many of these themes, let us single out a particular phrase—“exclamations of pleased surprise”—and its implications on foreign-Balinese learning relationships.
At a small weeknight performance at a Denpasar festival leading up to Independence Day (August 17) in 2012, a very small crowd had gathered to watch a single joged dancer. In this participatory form of dance, usually a troupe of female dancers performs, each pulling up a member of the audience to dance with her. As the first piece ended, this dancer began looking for her next “victim” and spotted me, standing to a side with a male friend. I thought that she would try to pull him up on stage with her; joged dancers usually pull up men and the dance is meant to be humorous, flirtatious, and often embarrassing, as modern dancers seem to especially enjoy targeting male foreigners when possible. Instead, however, she beckoned to me. I followed her to the stage and, to the surprise of all who watched, began to exactly mirror her movements. Her eyes grew slightly wide but then her closed-lipped dancer’s smile broadened. At the end of the dance, I thanked her in Indonesian and returned to my friend. He reported that the men sitting next to him had asked about me, who I was, whether I had studied. They seemed pleased—but not for more than a moment surprised—that I had learned enough to spend a competent, if not virtuosic, few minutes dancing with the joged.

Although the experience described above is reminiscent of that chronicled by McPhee at the opening of this chapter, there are some clear differences. Whether McPhee’s description of the locals emitting “exclamations of surprise” at him quickly learning musical passages is an accurate reflection of reality or 1930s self-centered, ethnocentric exaggeration—it is clear that something has changed. Although a bulé demonstrating some learning of gamelan or dance might be surprising in the moment—especially at a local festival, where no foreigners would be expected at all—the presence of gamelan-playing foreigners in Bali is not uncommon. Admittedly, my research took me primarily to locations in which strong local-foreign musical ties were already clearly established. However, several “random” encounters in my travels assured me that I—a young, female, American, gamelan-playing individual—was not the oddity that I had feared myself to be upon my first arrival in Bali.

The first and perhaps most extensive of these encounters was in the streets of Pengosekan in 2010. I was going to pick up my laundry from the cleaners on the corner, in classic laundry-day style wearing an oversized tee-shirt: my FSU gamelan shirt with the gamelan name and Hanuman on the front and the state capital and gamelan’s motto—“Kota Kalingga Jaya”—on the back. Right after I retrieved my laundry, a fellow in his mid-twenties ran up to me to ask me about my shirt. What was it from? Did I know what the back meant? (He asked it half-laughing;
the motto translates to “City of the Victorious Phallus.”) I assured him that I did; that it was a shirt from the gamelan I played in at my university in the United States. He pressed me: what kind of gamelan? I told him we did mostly gong kebyar. He smiled; he was from a few villages over and had used to play gong kebyar too! Unfortunately, he had to quit when his work—serving as a driver for foreigners—and his family obligations began to take up too much time.

We briefly chatted about kebyar, the pieces I had newly learned to play, and the fact that there were indeed gamelans in America before he left me on my way to carry my laundry home. He didn’t seem to think it was odd at all that I would be playing gamelan, or wearing my club tee-shirt while in Bali. After all, who wouldn’t be interested in gamelan?

What had predicated this change between McPhee’s experience in the 1930s of him being a gamelan-capable rarity and my experience almost eighty years later? Why was the gamelan-playing foreigner now a known quantity, even among Balinese individuals who are not professional or even practicing musicians? One answer became clear to me a few years later:

It was July 2012, the first time that I met Kadek Wahyu—recent ISI graduate, caregiver for the gamelan at the palace of the king of Kesiman (an area in Denpasar), and, for a few weeks, my kendang teacher. We were sitting on the hard, elaborately upholstered, and elaborately-carved Balinese-style couches in the house of Prof. I Nyoman Sedana, the head of pedalangan at ISI. Sedana, who had performed occasionally with the Florida State University gamelan while working on his doctorate at the University of Georgia, had arranged my lessons during my end-of-summer stay in Denpasar, a time when many of the Balinese-American contacts I knew were already heading home. Kadek, he assured me, would be a good match; he was the head of his class, about my age, and used to teaching both women and foreigners.

As Sedana ran off to attend to some other business and his wife, Seni, ran to grab us some tea and snacks, Kadek and I were left to continue a conversation from our previous one-sentence introduction. After a moment of silence he said, “So…do you know Michael Bakan?”

Kadek was not the first person who, meeting me for the first time as a foreign ethnomusicologist and student, asked about my scholarly forebears. Staying for a weekend outside of Ubud, the young leader of a jegog tourist group had asked me if I knew Michael Tenzer, who he had evidently met during some previous summer working in the area. I replied
that yes, I did; in addition to having met professionally, Tenzer had actually gone to school with my mother and was someone that my family had known for a long time. Perhaps he was unaware of truly how geographically gigantic the distance is between Florida and British Columbia, or perhaps he was simply used to the close social networks that musicians build in Bali, but my new jegog-playing acquaintance seemed unsurprised to hear of this connection. Though not surprised to meet a non-professional musician who knew Tenzer—the Canadian theorist-composer-ethnomusicologist has, after all, made frequent trips to Bali over the last thirty years—it was amusing and somewhat comforting to find that I had acquaintances in common with a stranger who I had just met halfway across the world.

In the case of my conversation with Kadek, his question yielded a conversation that went far beyond our introductory tea session. In addition to pursuing side work on Balinese cosmology, the body, and gamelan performance, Kadek was writing his master’s thesis about beleganjur; he was familiar with *Music of Death and New Creation* (Bakan 1999)—even though, to my knowledge, it is not available for sale in Indonesia. Over the course of our lessons over the next few weeks, we would often stop to talk about Balinese gamelan, internationalism, and pedagogy, as well as mutual colleagues and friends who we knew, either personally or by name and reputation.

### 7.1.1 Early Collaborations

Researchers, composers, and artists have now been coming to Bali with regularity over the past eighty to ninety years. And while musical life in Bali has, for the most part, continued to be sustained, to grow and develop in spite of this foreign research presence, the foreigners too have become part of this story; the influence of the “great men” is not only contained to the more internationally-oriented segments of Balinese society. For example, composer Colin McPhee, during his extended stay on Bali in the 1930s, formed what is believed to be the first children’s gamelan in the history of the island (Dibia and Ballinger 2004: 38, McPhee 1938). Up until that point, while children might begin to learn dance, they were not thought to have long enough attention spans to learn to play gamelan. Although it took almost twenty years for McPhee’s idea to catch on in popularity, children’s groups began to appear across the island in the 1960s, and today children’s gamelans perform and compete much in the same way as their adult counterparts (Dibia and Ballinger 2004: 38-39).
Another early example of such cross-cultural influence can be found in the development of modern kecak, known outside Bali primarily as the “Monkey Dance.” Kecak is a form of gamelan suara, or vocal gamelan; a chanting, traditionally all-male chorus accompanies dancers performing a story from the Hindu epics, most commonly today “The Abduction of Sita” from the Ramayana. While the cak (vocal chanting) part of the performances derived from historic Sanghyang Dedari (trance-dance) performances, its use to accompany scenes from the Ramayana epic was an innovation of the early 1930s, encouraged by the expatriate German painter Walter Spies. Although his influence on the genre’s development has perhaps been overplayed (Dibia 1996), Spies actually denied involvement in initiating this genre that would become a staple of tourist and avant-garde performances over the next eighty years, claiming it was an entirely Balinese innovation (Dibia and Ballinger 2004). However, his name is still well-known to the Balinese and non-Balinese alike who perform this genre.

Since the 1970s, the influx of foreign researchers, musicians, and artists from North America, Japan, and Australia in particular has created strong ties between Balinese musicians and their foreign counterparts. In some cases, the presence of foreigners directly affects compositional and performance aesthetics of Balinese artists, especially in avant-garde or new-style compositions; these influences and counter-influences can be quite purposeful, such as in the cases of the international, collaborative Balinese music hybridities that Peter Steele examines in his dissertation (Steele 2013) or perhaps sometimes more by chance (McGraw 2010: 69-72). This individual scholarly or artistic interchange may influence the development of a single composition by a single musical group, or it may have more far-reaching effects. Finally, continued connections between Balinese artists and foreign researchers have also fostered further avenues for group-based cultural exchange.

7.1.2 International Ties and the Pesta Kesenian Bali (PKB)

The Pesta Kesenian Bali (PKB, or “Bali Arts Festival”), Bali’s largest organized festival of the arts, has also played an important role in introducing the idea of foreign gamelan musicians to Bali. The brainchild of Indian-educated Balinese Governor (1978-1988) and former Director General of Culture (1968-1978) Professor Doctor Ida Bagus Mantra, the festival was founded in 1978 and organized in conjunction with officials from both political and arts institutions (Yamashita 2003: 47-48). Held in the center of Denpasar in a large park adjacent to the campus of ISI-Denpasar, the festival runs one month every year from late June through mid-
July. Opening with a parade on the first day, the remainder of the festival consists of about five performances per day held on one of three performance stages within the park, the largest of which is a stadium holding approximately 6,000 people. Organized events come in several types: performances of invited music, dance, and theater groups; festival competitions or competition-style activities (*lomba*) in music and other cultural activities; and special exhibitions, lectures, or discussions. The remainder of the park is filled with vendors selling food, specialty Indonesian clothing, books, jewelry, music, and other assorted wares.

Despite being the single largest artistic event on the island and having set dates every year (as opposed to performances for events based on the Balinese Hindu calendar), the festival attracts relatively few tourists from outside Indonesia. In strolling around the park grounds on an average festival evening, one might see just a handful of bulé taking in the festivities amongst the thousands of Indonesians in attendance. The festival truly takes as its purpose to be an exhibition of Balinese culture for the Balinese. Its scheduling in the summer coincides with the time when most of the public schools are out, thus at least theoretically allowing families and their children to travel from all over the island to witness the festivities. The competition-style performances, featuring different types of gamelan groups from the different regencies, encourages participation on a local level as individuals and whole sekaa vie for representation in the regional groups performing at this yearly event. While the demographics of the event tend towards favoring groups from Denpasar and the neighboring province of Gianyar, two regions that have risen as strongholds of traditional performing arts culture since the rise of tourism and the performing arts conservatories at the mid-century, the other regions are generally also well-represented.

Performances at the festival are not only limited to musical groups from Bali, however. There is always substantive representation of performing arts groups from around Indonesia: for example, the 2013 program featured performers from Yogyakarta, Sumatra, and both Eastern and Western Kalimantan (Bali Arts Festival website 2013). These Indonesian groups most often present works deriving from their own regional traditions rather than those based on the Balinese performing arts. Tourists from around Indonesia also make their way to the festival; walking through the shopping area of the festival grounds, one can overhear conversations in not only Balinese (what locals would speak to each other) but also Indonesian, which would only be spoken between the Balinese and the non-Balinese.
In addition to the strong local and regional influences on the Bali Arts Festival, foreign gamelan groups have played a significant and increasingly prominent role in the festival proceedings. The first international group to perform at the festival was in 1985 during Gamelan Sekar Jaya’s first tour to Bali. This trip, documented in the film *Kembali: To Return* (1989), was notable as the first large-scale exposure of the Balinese people to Balinese performing arts groups from outside Bali. While the Sekar Jaya performance presented “traditional” Balinese works, some social elements of the ensemble were unprecedented in Bali—for example, men and women playing together in the same ensemble. Although the direct result of this particular event is unknowable, this appearance may have encouraged the boom in formation of women’s gamelan ensembles throughout Bali (Susilo 2003: 16-17). No mixed-gender Balinese ensembles perform publicly to this day; however, there are some such ensembles that have sprung up more informally in villages throughout the island.

Gamelan Sekar Jaya has since conducted five other tours to Bali in conjunction with the Bali Arts Festival and was awarded the *Dharma Kusuma*—Bali’s highest award for artistic achievement—in 2000. Ethnomusicologist and former US Consular Agent to Bali Andy Toth claims that “It is no exaggeration to say that most of the 2.8 million Balinese have seen Sekar Jaya in live performance and television broadcasts” (Gamelan Sekar Jaya website 2013). However, it is not only Gamelan Sekar Jaya that has represented Balinese-American gamelan abroad; Gamelan Tunas Mekar, directed by Lasmawan, was the second group to receive the honor to be invited in 1996.37 Moving towards the present, it is rare to find a Bali Arts Festival program that does not contain at least one foreign group in its entirety or in collaboration with Balinese musicians; in 2010, gamelan groups from seven international countries participated in the festival.

Due to the length of time it takes to become a proficient Balinese gamelan performer, it is perhaps unsurprising that the majority of these groups are community-based, and student members that began their gamelan careers in academic groups have also spent substantial time playing gamelan outside of academic settings (Lueck 2012). While there are still Balinese who might not have personally encountered a foreign musician or dancer learning or performing Balinese performing arts in Bali, the presence of foreigners at the Bali Arts Festival and the re-

37 Their performance, and why that has thus far been the only performance at the PKB by any of Lasmawan's groups, is discussed in chapters two and six.
broadcasts of these performances on radio and television throughout the island has established foreign Balinese performing arts groups as a small but notable presence within Bali. Lasamawan’s work in Bangah, although in large part isolated from other cultural currents within Bali, has created one such conduit through which such interactions and influences occur.

7.2 Governmental and Academic Influences

Much of the development in American-Balinese artistic relations can be seen as a product of choices made by individuals or small groups. The arrival of the first American scholars to Bali, the organization of tours and residencies of Balinese musicians, the inauguration of gamelan ensembles within Western universities, the formation of Gamelan Sekar Jaya and other community groups, the decisions for Balinese musicians to host foreign students, Lasamawan’s decision to quit his work in Java and subsequently form gamelan groups in America—all of these choices could be seen as initiated by individuals.

Larger institutional apparatuses are also at work in this process, and are in fact necessary for the continuation of these transnational exchanges. Visiting artists and students require visas, funding, and often official institutional “hosts” within the country that they are visiting. Although one might view the goals of these institutions to be compatible with the goals of the individuals who comprise them and work with them—after all, both institutions and individuals want to further the Balinese performing arts—this is not always the case.

In *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing expands on her idea, friction, in terms of international interactions by proposing that friction can be conceptualized metaphorically in several different ways. She likens friction—the awkward, partially-misunderstood interactions that govern daily life—to a road, writing, “Roads create pathways that make motion easier and more efficient, but in doing so, they limit where we go. The ease of travel they facilitate is also a structure of confinement. Friction inflects historical trajectories, enabling, excluding, and particularizing” (Tsing 2005: 7).

Here, I liken institutions—primarily governmental and academic—to such roads. The roads that these institutions provide can be smooth or bumpy, compatible or incompatible with the destinations where students and teachers, scholars and musicians dream to go. Their presence shapes the landscape of the transnational Balinese performing arts world, but also governs and limits where individuals in this world can travel—unless the individuals leave these predetermined roads and create paths on their own to new destinations.
Although most of the stories in this dissertation so far have concerned the more “smooth” collaborative connections between individuals and institutions within Lasmawan’s world, we have already seen several points of friction: Lasmawan’s leaving Java for America, then California for Colorado; the expressions of misunderstanding about the gamelan’s sound by Levine’s Colorado College colleagues; points of pedagogical disagreement between Lasmawan and his students. All of these aforementioned issues might still provide occasional points of friction; however, in large part the smaller of these systematic frictions have been overshadowed by the overall goal of performing Balinese gamelan music. Below, I take a wider view and discuss the Bali-America gamelan phenomenon in terms of the relationships between the teacher-musicians and the institutions within which they reside. I more broadly explore how these types of institutions have shaped transnational Balinese music education between America and Bali at large, then focus on how they have functioned within Lasmawan’s particular case study.

7.2.1 The Governments and the Academies

On the individual level, the relationships between individuals, their sponsoring institutions, and the Indonesian and American governments play a crucial role in shaping how artists and students move between borders. Even though he was sponsored in a permanent job by Colorado College, it took over ten years after his arrival in the United States before Lasmawan and his family finally had stabilized their visa situation to be sure that they could stay in America permanently. Even shorter visits to the United States can be difficult to arrange for Indonesian artists seeking to conduct residencies. Obtaining a US visa requires a government interview in Surabaya, proof of sufficient funds while visiting the United States, and other elaborate documentation. From the other side, I encountered substantial problems in obtaining my own visa in 2012—the officials could not agree on whether studying music and dance and interviewing musicians counted as “cultural study” or “research;” accordingly, each department sent back my application once before it finally was accepted. On a larger level, however, it is not only visitation requirements that shape international exchange, but larger governmental programs—often deeply interrelated with academic, institutional programs—that have in large part shaped the nature of scholarly and artistic between the two nations.

Foreign governmental policies have long influenced the development of the arts institutional apparatus in Bali. In *Radical Traditions: Reimagining Culture in Balinese*
Contemporary Music, Andrew McGraw outlines a history of economic support for Indonesian artists sponsored through US government-supported organizations such as the Fulbright program and the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations. The earliest of their programs began in the 1950s as an attempt to counter Soviet influence on the young Sukarno government (McGraw 2013: 33-34). This support, he notes, was initially in large portion to encourage the development of modern arts in Bali that were not based on Soviet realism. Although McGraw is concerned primarily with how these developments shaped the education and development of Balinese musik kontemplorer composers, he also outlines how these interactions influenced academic institutions: that Rockefeller funds supported “local university libraries, provided materials to painters, and recording equipment to musicians” and in part funded Balinese experimental musicians to come to the United States by engaging them to teach traditional gamelan at UCLA (McGraw 2013: 34) as well as taking part in their own studies in modernist forms.

Today, although the anti-communist undertones have faded, organizations created during this time continue to support artists. The Asian Cultural Council, the “only organization in the world whose sole mission is to support cultural exchange between the United States and Asia and within the countries of Asia,” was originally part of the Rockefeller programs when it was formed as the Asian Cultural Program in 1963 (Asian Cultural Council website 2013). The current organization, launched in 1980, continues to sponsor several exchanges of Indonesian and American musicians and scholars every year.

Within Indonesia, the extent of governmental influence on transnationalism in the Indonesian performing arts can be seen not so much as an exchange of individuals, although there are established programs for non-Indonesians to study within the country (for example, the Dharmasiswa scholarship program to bring in scholars from around the world.). Instead, governmental policy towards the arts and artists has been largely shaped by fears of culture loss due to increased tourism on the island. During the 1960s, a number of governmental agencies were founded to address these concerns—the Balinese Department of Education and Culture (Departmen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan), The Commission for Evaluating and Promoting Culture (LISTIBIYA, Majelis Pertimbangan dan Pembinaan Kebudayaan), and others worked to codify traditional arts forms and regulate their performance. In 1971, The Balinese Department of Education and Culture standardized a conceptual paradigm for rating traditional performing arts genres from sacred (wali), and thus able to performed for temple ceremonies.
only, to secular (*bali-balihan*) thus able to be performed at any occasion (Picard 1996, Vickers 1989). LISTIBIYA, founded five years earlier with direct preservationist goals, maintained an increasing role in the codification of the Balinese arts, performing tasks from evaluating the content of and licensing tourist performances to regulating the content of *Kuliah Kerja Nyata*, a three-month program in which conservatory students went to teach standardized, traditional-style Balinese performing arts works in the villages (Umeda 2007).

In the early days, the Balinese conservatories—such as KOKAR, established in 1960 at the behest of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kantor Pewakilan Departmen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan) in Singaraja—represented another wing of Sukarno’s governmental artistic policy. This cultural-governmental policy, though not directly influenced by American systems of education, was in large part modeled after the Dutch Colonial government. Some early components of conservatory education—drawing teachers from around the island yet teaching from standardized repertoires, creating notation for Balinese gamelan music, accepting women to study gamelan, and teaching dance in mirrored studios can be directly linked to developments in Western-style arts conservatories (Umeda 2007: 44). The pedagogical style can differ too between *seniman alam* (“natural” artists, those not affiliated with the institutional apparatus) who are concerned with village aesthetics and institution-based instructors. In examining the difference between village-based and conservatory-based methods for teaching wayang kulit, Brita Heimarck notices a difference in teaching style: that students receive more formalized courses and are expected to ask more questions of their teachers (Heimarck 2003: 147-184).

In addition to changes in Balinese performing and pedagogical style wrought by the conservatories, they have also changed the dynamics of power—musical, economic, and political—within Bali. In *Music of Death and New Creation*, Michael Bakan discusses at length the career implications of choosing to be a part of the conservatory system or remaining a *seniman alam*. In contrasting the educational backgrounds and careers of his two major beleganjur teachers—the conservatory-trained I Ketut Gedé Asnawa and I Ketut Sukarata, a well-known *seniman alam* in Denpasar—he illuminates the complexity of the situation. Sukarata, a successful composer and musician, perceived that he had been marginalized, overlooked in being awarded official markers of musical success; he had substantial difficulty in getting...
recording contracts and felt ignored in the selection of committees to judge beleganjur competitions (Bakan 1999: 179-184).

In contrast, Asnawa had received degrees from KOKAR (1974) and ASTI (1980), a graduate degree from ISI-Yogyakarta (1985), and a MM in Ethnomusicology at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (1991) as well as having taught on the faculties of KOKAR and STSI from the 1980s through the early 2000s. However, caught in a complex world riddled with tensions between Balinese traditional life, Indonesian institutional bureaucracy, and Western-style systems of prestige, Asnawa also saw his “success” within this institutional music system as a pyrrhic victory that came at great cost to his professional, financial, and community stability (Bakan 1999: 194-206). At least partially on account of such challenges, Asnawa eventually left the Balinese conservatory system and has been teaching in the United States for over ten years, currently as a full-time visiting professor at the Robert E. Brown Center for World Music at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Although Lasmawan’s career path has some differences from Asnawa’s, their pursuit of higher education, followed by a move to America to pursue better career opportunities, show some similarity.

The effects of institutional academic success are not limited to the dosen (university professors) such as Asnawa also impact their families socially as well. During my stay in Denpasar, I took dance lessons with Seniasih, the wife of I Nyoman Sedana, the head of puppetry (pedalangan) at ISI. Originally from Gianyar, she studied both in the village and at the conservatory and has performed with a number of groups in Bali. She has toured in America, Europe, and parts of Asia over the course of her life, and accompanied her husband to the United States while he pursued a master’s degree and a doctorate. After returning to Bali, however, she rarely has the opportunity to perform at all, instead spending most of her days at their house in the Denpasar village of Kesiman, cleaning the house and taking care of their two children who still live at home. “They [the dance group organizers] don’t ask me anymore,” she told me one day as we were sitting in her living room, sipping bakso (meatball soup) that she had bought us from a cart outside. “They say they can’t afford to pay me enough,” the assumption being that she would ask for more than her cut of the performance fee now that she has lived in America and her husband works at the university. In the course of repeated discussions on these themes at later points, she iterated her stance on performance, always something to the effect of “I tell them, I say, I don’t care, I just want to dance. But you know, it’s ok, I just teach now, the village
girls...maybe that is my life now.” Although she is still able to perform with her family when they are invited to tour, her costumes spend most of their time hanging pristinely in the closet.

Although it can bring about personal trials for musicians and their families, the path to achieving influence within “official” musical channels—as instructors at the conservatories, selection committees and judges for the Bali Arts Festival and more regional lomba, pegawai (mid-level civil servants) in governmental bureaus of culture, etc.—relies increasingly on institutional connections and education, increasingly formal degrees in the United States. Many senior professors and top administrators at the Balinese conservatories of the last few years—I Madé Bandem, I Wayan Rai, I Wayan Dibia, I Nyoman Sedana, I Nyoman Catra, I Nyoman Astita, among others—have received graduate degrees in ethnomusicology or related fields in the United States; such an education is almost required to rise to the top at such institutions.

American professors, meanwhile, are not usually required to achieve degrees from foreign universities. However, the old preference within ethnomusicology for its scholars to undertake substantial fieldwork in a foreign country persists. Although there is a growing population of ethnomusicologists who pursue fieldwork “at home” (within local communities or those to which they already belong) or “online” (Nettl 2005, Barz and Cooley 2008), markers of professional job marketability as an ethnomusicologist—grants achieved, languages learned, world music ensembles taught—often depends heavily on making and maintaining international research connections. Thus, transnational education in theory and practice of the performing arts between America and Indonesia is a system that is both systematically required and symbiotic: American researchers who receive grants to pursue fieldwork abroad may meet foreign colleagues who they can then invite back to study and pursue prestigious residencies at American universities. On the surface, such arrangements are often mutually beneficial—musically, culturally, academically, financially, and politically—for both the individuals and the institutions with which they are affiliated. However, such collaborations do not always come without a cost; as Tsing suggests, competing interests between individuals and institutions may make for collaborations that are potentially fraught with complications and misunderstandings. Because such transnational pedagogical stints can be seen as a marker of prestige that can change the course of an individual’s professional career, they can be highly contested, often with difficult choices to be made.
7.2.2 Institutional Politics: Korupsi and Brain Drain

Lasmawan’s transition from Java to the United States in 1990 was not initially a smooth one. His initial aim—to take a short teaching residency in California—was not an unusual request for him to make of his employers. He had already taken several touring and teaching leaves from the conservatory before—in fact, he recalls, chuckling, “Many more than the other ones [his colleagues].” However, there were some of his requests that the institution would not fulfill:

I had a problem when I was in Solo—I was supposed to go to Japan, my school said yes; I was supposed to go to England, my school said yes, and also to go to America, actually, I make a decision by myself actually because my friend from USA sent the contract to the school, but the school never give me the contract.

But they my friend call—Dr. Robert Brown—and until he sent me the contract to my house, when I got the contract, I just decided by myself. At the time, basically—well, my idea from the beginning, I don’t want to get a job in Java. I just wanted to study in Java to get my degree and then I want to get a job in Bali. But, my school in Java just gave me the job, and I just go to the job, and this type of job is a government job, and I could not move back to Bali. I already talk to Pak Bandem, and he said, “Oh, if you move back to Bali, we’ll give you the job” and my school in Solo, they don’t let me go because they want me to stay because at that time I was part of the senior faculty members (Lasmawan 2012b.)

Lasmawan, of course, left—he went to America and never looked back. His story, however, is not unique among Indonesian dosen, who often face bureaucratic glass ceilings in their pursuit of a career. The fakultas (departments) of the Indonesian conservatories are a notoriously political arena. The performing arts world on Bali is a relatively small one, in which everyone knows everybody else (and is often distantly related to them). Although collaborations and good relations between dosen are common—Lasmawan, even having lived outside of Bali for almost thirty years, considers most of them as friends—old personal, familial, and more broadly political rivalries often lurk just below the surface in personal, artistic, and academic interactions. Cultural self-representation—the core of the Balinese economy—is a central economic and political issue; dosen are often at the center of these representational debates (Bakan 1999, McGraw 2013).

Sometimes, such tensions do not just simmer under the surface or await individual action, passively, like in Lasmawan’s situation—sometimes, they explode. Beginning in 2008, ISI Denpasar became embroiled in scandal. I Wayan Rai, the standing rector of ISI (and also a noted
performer and American-trained ethnomusicologist, one of Mantle Hood’s final doctoral students at the University of Baltimore) was suspected of rigging his re-election to that position, possibly backed by non-Balinese bureaucrats in Jakarta, and reconfiguring the faculty senate to give power to his supporters. Shortly thereafter, a handful of administrative faculty members (including Rai) were also implicated in several different cases of mismanaging government funds.

In terms of what actually happened with the election, the reconfiguring of the senate, or the management of funds, the situation remains unclear; Rai cited official ISI policies and precedent to support his actions at every turn. Reports in the *Jakarta Post*, the newspaper with the most widespread reach to report on the subject, made little attempt to present a balanced picture, nearly shutting out the voices of Rai and his supporters. Most of the Balinese musicians with whom I spoke clearly had an opinion on the matter; however, most would not publicly support one side or the other, instead expressing sadness at watching as a rift continued to grow between their longtime friends, colleagues, former classmates, and, in some cases, family members.

Adding fuel to the flames of an already tense situation was the firing of I Madé Arnawa in 2010. The former head of the karawitan (traditional music) department, Arnawa had openly voiced concerns about Rai’s second term. However, the reason given for Arnawa’s dismissal was that he had abandoned his duties at ISI to pursue a long-planned residency with Gamelan Sekar Jaya. Having received no response after months of attempts by both Arnawa and representatives of Sekar Jaya to receive proper permission from the authorities at ISI, Arnawa decided to proceed with his plans to travel to the United States, with all parties involved hoping that—as had happened in the past—permission would be granted retroactively (Vitale 2012). It was not, and later—according to the *Jakarta Post*—at least ten other lecturers were either openly or tacitly refused permits to pursue appointments or study abroad (Erviani 2012a).

The removal of Arnawa, equivalent to firing a tenured professor in the United States, had never before happened in the entire history of the institution. In addition to removing him from his professional position, this also erased his government pension and official standing. (His salary, however, continued to be deposited into ISI bank accounts for over a year after he was dismissed). In one of the *Jakarta Post* articles, it is noted that Arnawa was now enjoying “farming, teaching traditional performances to villagers and composing music”—as well as
pursuing prestigious residencies with UCLA-Berkeley, Pomona College, and as resident guest music director of Gamelan Sekar Jaya (Erviani 2012a).

In an artistic world still fundamentally structured and nuanced by an ever-shifting balance between personal, familial, geographically based, and professional relationships, relatively few individuals, Balinese or otherwise, have been willing to speak openly about the situation. However, actions speak louder than words, and Arnawa’s situation was not the first of its kind. As discussed at length above, many prominent Balinese performing artists—especially those affiliated with ISI or other official institutions—are asked to foreign countries to teach and perform, and are often invited to study abroad as well. Many such residencies have been conducted successfully, with institutional approval; however, others have not turned out as planned. In addition to Lasmawan, Asnawa initially pursued teaching in the United States in part because of bureaucratic glass ceilings at ISI. More recently, I Nyoman Sedana pursued a residency at Butler University in Indianapolis in the fall of 2012. His solution to the issue of being granted official university leave: conduct the residency on his personal vacation time instead.

In addition to the firing of Arnawa, perhaps one of the more dramatic events in the recent ISI conflict was the retirement of I Madé Bandem in May 2011 after being accused of siding against Rai. Born in Singapadu and educated at UCLA and Wesleyan, Bandem had played a key role in the development of several Indonesian arts conservatories: he served as the director of ASTI from 1982-1987, the director of STSI from 1989-1997, and as head of ISI-Yogyakarta, Java, from 1997-2006. He was also an active member of the GOLKAR party for twenty years, and ran (unsuccessfully, albeit with widespread support) for governor of Bali in 1998. He has published several internationally-recognized books and has also served on a number of national-level governmental committees for the arts and for education through the early 2000s, as well as retaining professional status at ISI-Denpasar. Although Bandem was one of Rai’s teachers, mentors and supporters, Rai accepted his resignation. Bandem and his wife, Ni Suasthi Bandem, resumed their full-time positions that they had held teaching gamelan and dance at Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts for the past four years.

For a number of individuals, Balinese and otherwise, Rai’s acceptance of Bandem’s resignation was tantamount to the utmost in disrespect for such a senior member of the Balinese
arts community. In one of the *Jakarta Post* articles, I Wayan Dibia, former rector of ISI and current head of the dance department, suggested that:

Rai should have rejected Bandem’s resignation in the first place, or awarded him with an emeritus professor title. Bandem made significant contributions to ISI and should be treated with the utmost respect (Dibia in Erviana 2012b.)

Current ISI faculty members were also concerned about the dismissal or departure of internationally prominent faculty. Sedana is quoted as noting his puzzlement at how Bandem was not kept on at ISI, given is strong international profile:

Bandem is one of a few ethnomusicologists with extensive knowledge and research on Indonesian traditional music. The universities abroad are dying to get Bandem on their faculty lists (Sedana in Erviana 2012b.)

In a slightly different context, Sedana asks, “If all senior professors are being pushed away or stripped of their authority, then what will happen to the educational quality of ISI?”

What indeed? When I talked to Bandem at Holy Cross in October 2012, he commented on how relatively peaceful life was in America. Although the American academic world still had its own issues, there was “much less bureaucracy.” The music and dance course that he was teaching at Holy Cross was full of enthusiastic undergraduates, and always had a long waiting list. Unhampered by extensive Balinese social obligations, he and Suasthi were finally able to focus on their research—he, writing a book on the history of Balinese gamelan; she, translating obscure *lontar* (ancient palm-leaf manuscripts), on musical performance. Additionally, they habitually returned to Bali twice a year during university holidays. In the wintertime, they put on a lavish arts production for tourist hotels in Ubud and Kuta, Bali’s two major tourist meccas. In the summer, they live in Singapadu, taking care of family religious obligations, performing, and fielding a never-ending stream of guests. And very rarely, Bandem had an American student come visit him at home, in Bali.

Bandem’s life path in teaching in America is substantially different than that of Lasmawan. The Holy Cross gamelan is generally directed by visiting Balinese guest artists, most of whom only come over for a few years; however, with Bandem’s and Suasthi’s degrees, either of them can be employed as full-time faculty at the university. Additionally, with much closer geographic distances between gamelans in the urban northeast of the United States than in the Rocky Mountain region and many more individuals, Balinese and otherwise, teaching smaller numbers of groups, there is a larger artistic support system—for example, while Lasmawan
might “borrow” student members of his other own groups to perform with one of the university gamelans at their semesterly concerts, the Bandems might instead be able to invite I Nyoman Sapatanyana’s whole family—experienced native Balinese performers who work with a substantial number of their own groups—to play and dance with the Holy Cross students.

Both Bandem and Suasthi seemed to enjoy being able to shape the course of Balinese musical education without having to face the complex system of Indonesian political, economic, and educational bureaucracy that Bandem in part built. However, in contrast to sunnier reports that Bandem had given earlier in the 1990s (Heimarck 2003: 175), they are both now more openly concerned about the legacy of Balinese musical education for the Balinese, particularly the non-correlation between obtaining degrees and obtaining jobs. When their children were in school, Suasthi had to teach them and the neighboring children how to dance, because the teacher at the local school assigned to teach dance—a graduate of the teaching school, not of STSI or ISI—had insufficient knowledge to teach.

That was many years ago; now the problem seems more endemic. In discussing the economic difficulties of young Balinese arts teachers, Suasthi again repeated almost the same figure as had a friend of mine who had recently graduated from ISI and had been hunting for a stable job for several years: it was a $15,000-20,000 bribe to obtain a permanent teaching job or to obtain a place on the provincial boards of culture. “So,” she concluded, “If students want to teach when they graduate, they either must pay the bribe or be creative.” One of the ways to “be creative,” it seems, is to seek work elsewhere within the global economy.

American world music classes, generally lacking the class time to delve deeply into Indonesian history and politics, tend to paint the communal music-making of Bali in the same soft tones as did early ethnographers of the island—the “smiling Balinese” with their peaceful society in which social roles, like the notes of a well-played kotekan, interlock together effortlessly. But as any visitor who has stayed in Bali long enough to make it past the fruity drinks and the sarong stands will come to realize that it is a place like any other, a place of messy engagements, misunderstandings.

The story above should concern American gamelan musicians; no matter who is at fault, such discord can have no happy ending in terms of preserving and promoting the Balinese musical arts in Bali—or in the United States. It is understandable that the Balinese conservatories would be hesitant to send their best and brightest scholars and musicians outside of Bali too.
often; although the Balinese more than others seem culturally tied to their homeland, the excitement and prestige of travel, the opportunities to achieve new educational goals, and the promise of better pay might prove for some to be incentives too heady to pass up.

Correspondingly, many institutions that regularly host Balinese artists—including Gamelan Sekar Jaya and Holy Cross—have the policy to only bring artist affiliates and teachers over for limited contracts to discourage Balinese “brain drain.”

The bond between gamelans in Bali and America are based not only on the individual work of performers and teachers who maintain these groups and strengthening the relationships, pedagogical and personal, between students and performing artists in both countries. They are also based on the actions of individuals as parts of larger institutions to whose whims the gamelans and their musicians are subject—unless, of course, they escape the bounds of the system.

7.2.3 Lasmawan and the Politics of Personal Choice

Despite the extensive number of Balinese gamelan ensembles in America, there are relatively few Balinese gamelan teachers who reside in the country on a permanent basis—generally only around five at any given time. There are many more teachers who make less permanent visits; however, for many young students in Bali seeking work, the call to remain at home, within their immersive network of geographically based social ties, is strong. For example, my teacher Kadek had received scholarship offers to study as close to home as in Java, he was still thinking it over; Java was very far away from his family, his life in southern Bali. By Lasmawan’s arrival in 1990, there had already been a number of Balinese performing artists who had come to the States for extended periods—I Madé Bandem and I Nyoman Wenten, for example—but it did not make Lasmawan’s decision to come to the United States any less unusual. He recalls, “At that time—I decided, I quit my job, my government job that I already took for 13 years. Nobody understood, nobody believed it, because it’s difficult to get government job here in Indonesia. But I just quit it” (Lasmawan 2012b).

Lasmawan struggled initially in this new country that had its own set of governmental and academic bureaucracies to be navigated. However, he and his gamelans have subsequently flourished. This was in large part thanks to receiving a half-time faculty position at Colorado College, despite not having a Western graduate degree. Unlike some of his other peers who have achieved higher education degrees in the United States, Lasmawan has not. Although he has
considered pursuing more education, he laughs, “The degrees are for people who need the job, need the money. I have both, I think!” (He has, however, been pursuing doctoral coursework in his spare time.) Unlike many early world music teachers who were only employed and paid as adjunct instructors (Sumarsam 2004: 80-84), the financial support that Lasmawan receives from the groups and students that he teaches, both in smaller and larger amounts, enables him to continue his work and take care of his family.

It is not only governmental and academic institutions that shape individual lives, but also social ones. Lasmawan uprooted his family twice—once from Java, once from California—in response to perceived opportunities elsewhere. He is so firmly embedded in the United States that, although his name is still known and respected among many of the middle aged or elder Balinese performing artists that I met in Gianyar and Denpasar, the young students of ISI do not know of him at all. He has moved in large part outside of the Balinese music-scholarly apparatus. However, his maintenance of personal ties to members of his musical communities in the United States, to his family and the village musicians and Bali, and his merging of the two communities through return trips home to host foreign students has allowed him to build himself a new infrastructure. Though in part governed by the oversight of the American institutions for which he works, standards of cultural behavior within his village community in Bangah, and the laws of international travel, Lasmawan has “been creative,” building himself as a teaching institution within the United States.

Lasmawan’s pedagogical world is built on modern ideals of multicultural education. He travels for farther distances in a month than many Balinese would travel in years, maybe even a lifetime. His communication with students and family across the country and across the ocean depends in large part on Facebook and other social networking tools. Yet, the community of gamelan players that he has built depends on one of the oldest forms of social organization: kinship. Some of his personal and professional relationships with students may be fleeting; others create partnerships between not him and his students but also between him and others of his students, other members of the transnational Balinese community that last a lifetime. Based in large part on transmission of knowledge, these students, these teachers, these friends-almost-family—these are the networks of teaching and mutual exchange that he has formed. By embracing a life-path that was nearly unthinkable at the time he left Indonesia, Lasmawan’s network has recreated a social structure that is most innately Balinese.
7.3 “Western Theory, Balinese Practice?” The Metacultural Reality of Transnational Balinese Gamelan Communities

I Nyoman Sedana is another Balinese performer-pedagogue who has taken a more unusual path. Educated first in the conservatory system in Bali, Sedana received an M.A. in Theatre from Brown University in 1993 and a Ph.D. in Drama and Theater Art from the University of Georgia in 2002. One of the more internationally focused of the ISI faculty, Sedana regularly pursues international residencies and publishes scholarly articles within international academic journals in addition to maintaining his regular teaching schedule in Denpasar. In personal communications with myself and others (Heimarck 2003), he often notes that his teaching philosophy is borne of “Western theory and Balinese practice.” His latest project included leading students at Butler University in a performance of Shakespeare’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” couched in the language of traditional Balinese music and dance. In terms of teaching his own Balinese students, he cites his study of major English-language theater (Shakespeare), readings in anthropological theory, and lessons at the University of Georgia writing center as major influences in how he has them think about traditional Balinese stories and constructing new narrative performances.

Sedana, primarily based in Bali, brought pedagogical elements of the West with him when he returned home to teach. However, almost the opposite seems to be true of Lasmawan. Although he sometimes uses teaching techniques that are “not Balinese”—for example, giving notation for core melody parts, which is done only rarely in Bali—this is not necessarily a direct indication of his work in America; cipher notation has been used in Java for over one hundred years, the result of Dutch colonial interests in the gamelan ensembles that they found there (Sumarsam 2013). Additionally, most of Lasmawan’s practices—from demonstrating with the mallet, singing parts to students to lighting incense by the gong—are Balinese-derived, and ones that both he and his American students identify as being “culturally Balinese.” There is certainly some expectation from students, the colleges and universities, and the broader communities that the gamelan look “exotic” or “Balinese” (Harnish 2004: 134). Additionally, Lasmawan rarely programs compositions for his groups that deviate from traditional Balinese forms, whether composed by others or himself; although he had been active in the world of musik kontemporer, the American classroom is the place for a more traditional approach.
The experiences of Lasmawan, Sedana, and their colleagues and students in the Balinese performing arts have are neither “American” nor “Balinese;” their philosophies, what they teach and learn is a result of personal experience, of choice, of a tangled mix of cultural influences that are perhaps as untraceable as they are diverse. The traditional narrative of “us” studying with “them,” or perhaps “them” coming over here to study with “us,” is no longer the operative dynamic. Balinese culture lives in an America that is itself vastly diverse, with individuals and communities shaped by their own independent histories; the same could be said for American culture in Bali, one of the many forces that, through dialectic processes, has shaped the “traditional” aspects of Bali that exist today.

Viewing the performative and pedagogical system of individuals and institutions that exists between America and Bali as a dialogue between two separate cultural and social-systemic entities is inaccurate. The individual and communal lifeworlds that shape gamelan culture in Bangah and in Denver, for example, are mutually intertwined, both with each other and with other cultural aspects of those communities. Authenticity—so passé in ethnomusicological theory, yet so sought after in its pedagogical practice—lives musically and culturally not only in the performance of a championship group from Gianyar at Badung at the Bali Arts Festival, but resides equally in the performance of Gamelan Sekar Jaya, Gamelan Tunas Mekar, or Gamelan Dharma Swara at that same venue. That Kadek (an accomplished beleganjur drummer and burgeoning Balinese scholar) would pick up an American book on beleganjur (Bakan’s) to learn about the music that he already played; that the same book would be read by Luke, an Englishman who was just learning the genre; that both of them, separately, would discuss it with me, a student who studied with the author in America but had come to Bali in part to work on her beleganjur drumming—this series of encounters and discussions is as illuminative about the authentic nature of Balinese music as the fact that such a book exists, its description of Balinese culture, or all of the cultural and musical events happening all over Bali that did not make it into the book’s pages.

Lasmawan’s students study gamelan with him in America to learn about Balinese culture; as they have noted, many of them come to Bali, the source of the music that they study, to learn more about Balinese culture and the place of gamelan within it. Gamelan culture in the United States is undeniably much different than in Bali, transplanted away from the social, cultural, religious, political, and economic structures that shape it, which are not the same as in America.
However, those structures are shared, inter-influential. The students who come to study in Bangah may perceive their experiences of the village and its life much differently than the Balinese. But when they play at the odalan, they are defining the cultural and spirituality of that place as much as they are taking it in. The community of teachers and learners, performers and audiences built between Bali and America is not defined by “self” and “other.” In that Balinese gamelan has been transplanted from Bali, flourished there, and sent seeds of new cultures back to Bali, it instead creates an ecosystem of gamelans that is shaped as much by those foreign transplants as it is by the original source.
Water is of the utmost importance in traditional Balinese society; a local name for Balinese Hinduism, “Agama Tirta” (religion of holy water), reflects this importance. The water originates high up in the peaks of the volcanic mountains, the most *kaja* (high, central, and sacred) points on the island. From the mountains, it flows downward to the sea, the most *kelod* (low, profane, peripheral) locations geographically, crosscutting all of the banjars, desas, and kabupaten in its path. These waters bring sustenance and new growth to all they feed, including forests, people, animals, and most crucially, the life-giving rice that is foundational to the Balinese diet. The people across different banjars and regions cooperate and coordinate in routing irrigation canals so that all can benefit, yet in ways which ensure that self-identity and self-interest are certainly never ignored. Their rice irrigation societies, called *subak* (Geertz 1973, Lansing 2006), are tasked with maintaining the course of the water and the water temples that spiritually protect and preserve the flow of the water from one location to another. Each *subak* has its own identity, its own egalitarian yet hierarchical organization, and its own links to other social units (banjars, desas, etc.) that it crosscuts. Their relationships are not without friction, as representatives of different social units may have different ideas about how the system should best function as a whole. Yet, although each member of a *subak* may have different interests, all of them depend on the root source of the water and the network that binds them; they work together to ensure the preservation and distribution of this vital resource.

![Fig. 8.1 Rice terraces in Bangah](image-url)
Lasmawan’s metaphor for how knowledge of gamelan music is transmitted from teacher to student—*air mengalir*, running water—reflects this model. The elders of the Balinese gamelan community in Bali are like the wellspring of this musical knowledge, which flows from teacher to student, each person marking another turn in the network of irrigation canals, another place where water (knowledge) from different sources may be added and then redistributed among the subsequent sources. Like water flowing from the mountains to the sea, the precise composition of musical knowledge may change on its path as new streams are added or split away. Although the locations through which musical knowledge travels and is adopted may be vastly different from each other, the musical traditions, like the water, nourish and maintain all the communities that they touch, including the “ancestral” ones in Bali themselves, which, like communities everywhere, are continually engaged in processes of transformation, rediscovery, and renewal. However, the “sea” (foreign gamelan groups) does not constitute the end of the water’s journey. When water reaches the sea, it evaporates and returns to the mountains; correspondingly, the members of foreign gamelans and their musical and pedagogical innovations return to Bali, both literally and figuratively, influencing the very system of knowledge through which they initially learned.

If musical knowledge is like water, the gamelan’s teachers and students, meanwhile, may be compared to the members of the subak whose effort and devotion are responsible for the continued movement of knowledge. Those musicians closer to the source (Bali) might be considered as principal authorities on matters of musical knowledge and its transmission, but teachers cannot teach without willing students and gamelans cannot be sustained without economic support from institutions or interested audiences. Each teacher and student in the transnational Balinese gamelan pedagogical community, from the master Balinese musician of international notoriety to the novice undergraduate gamelan player at Colorado College, has a role to play in ensuring that this knowledge continues to flow and nourish the communities that it reaches. For the subak to function efficaciously, for the “waters” of gamelan knowledge to nourish every nook and cranny along its myriad pathways, all must take part and contribute. This idea of an “international gamelan subak,” specifically one interconnecting Balinese and U.S. nodes of gamelan activity such as those I have described through this dissertation, is the guiding metaphor for this chapter. And it is a metaphor that finds revealing parallels in another.
metaphorical construction relating to gamelan that was invoked by one of my consultants, Asnawa, when he described the gamelan itself as a metaphorical society or administrative entity in which efficacious functionality is tied directly to each “member” (instrument/person) fulfilling his/her assigned role and function within the greater operation of the social/musical unit:

It was a bright June morning in 2012. Even early on, the sun beat strongly over the roofs of the houses in Denpasar, heating up the courtyards below. Today was the blessing ceremony for a new gamelan gong kebyar that was to be sent to Appalachian State University (ASU) in Boone, North Carolina. Laurie Semmes, an ASU ethnomusicology professor with a Ph.D. from Florida State University (where her dissertation advisor, too, was Michael Bakan) was in Bali to oversee the completion and shipping of the gamelan. She had been working with I Ketut Gedé Asnawa who, as one of Bakan’s principal Balinese teachers, may be regarded as a root of the gamelan pedagogical tree to which I belong (and Laurie as well, who has played gamelan but does not specialize in that area). Although I had not had substantial opportunities to stay or work with Asnawa previously, he had been kind enough to help me with a dance costume purchase for Florida State University two years before, the first time that I went to Bali. As another musician who was in some ways indirectly connected to this new gamelan, they had invited me to the ceremony to watch the priest bless the gamelan and to hear it be inaugurated with a short performance.

I was waiting with Asnawa in the large balé of his house in Denpasar, surveying the instruments that he had helped procure for the university. We began to talk about his experiences with gamelan, and the conversation soon took a philosophical turn towards understanding gamelan as a community. According to Asnawa, a gamelan—as both a musical and social entity—functions in similar ways to Balinese traditional communities at large. He told me that each instrument, like each person, has a role to play. Turning to the gamelan, he started to gesture at the different instrumental sections. He pointed towards the large keyed metallophones in the back. “The jegogan,” he said, “are like old men.” The calung, slightly higher and the keepers of the core melody, were like middle-aged officials. The faster, interlocking instruments were the young men who busily took care of society’s daily needs. The kendang were the heads of the village, directing the activities. And the gongs were the priests, connecting the activities of the men with the earth and the heavens. The players, Asnawa added, were each particularly
suited to a different instrument in the gamelan at a different time, their roles in the ensemble changing depending on individual growth and community needs.

8.1 Affinity, Pedagogy, Kinship, and Ownership

The term **affinity** is frequently used by non-Indonesians when describing the characteristic nature of how Western individuals come to and become engaged with playing gamelan. In explaining why individuals choose to play in Javanese gamelan groups in the United Kingdom, Maria Mendonça wrote that:

Players often described becoming ‘hooked’ and addicted to gamelan performance, to the extent that it takes over other aspects of their lives, leading them to an involvement in the wider network of gamelan performance outside their local manifestation, and sometimes leading them to become specialist performers (Mendonça 2002: 48.)

She broadens the discussion from **affinity** and attraction to the aesthetic qualities of gamelan performance, to the communal qualities of gamelan performance in embracing Victor Turner’s model of “spontaneous communitas”—“the transient personal experience of togetherness” (Turner 1969: 132)—noting that “The majority of players I have encountered over the years marvel at (or when suffering the ill effects, despair at) the entanglement of social and musical aspects at all levels of gamelan performance” (Mendonça 2002: 537).

Writing a decade after Mendonça, in her master’s thesis on American community gamelans, Ellen Lueck reinterpreted Mark Slobin’s work to suggest that “the **affinity group** is based upon choice—individuals choosing to engage in musical activity and community which is not necessarily rooted in one’s own cultural heritage or upbringing” (Lueck 2012: 10). The focus of her investigation is on what happens “when **affinity** morphs into full **identity**. In other words, can non-Balinese, North American gamelan enthusiasts claim Balinese gamelan as their own music?” (Lueck 2012: 9). In positing this question, Lueck is essentially questioning whether or not the North American lineages of Balinese gamelan can stand on their own. She concludes that:

The North American BGAG [Balinese Gamelan Affinity Group] has developed its own culture and its own relationship to gamelan music and gamelan practices, while continuing to revere and acknowledge Bali as the authentic source. The Balinese Gamelan Affinity Group has become a distinct location of the mind where non-Balinese gather and **belong**. (Lueck 2012: 134)
However, she does not present this as a hard conclusion; rather, she suggests that the question of ownership is “In some perpetual cultural grey area. This ownership can only be self-proclaimed. To a Balinese gamelan artist, gamelan in North America is still a borrowing of sorts” (Lueck 2012: 134-135).

The idea of gamelan affinity—that musicians come to the genre and play by choice, rather than through force of heritage—is certainly one reason why gamelan cultures that are geographically based outside of Indonesia come to exist. However, these foreign gamelan communities continue to be sustained and nourished by continual interactions with those in Bali, both through the direct interactions of their members and through the knowledge that flows from teacher to students. As non-Balinese musicians become patrons of the Balinese performing arts and then performers of these arts in Bali and abroad, they come to constitute a central and integral part of this performing arts tradition.

Subaks and gamelans function based on a balance of power and influence that is as much hierarchical as it is egalitarian; similar structures can be found throughout Balinese social organization, from the banjar to the family unit. Such parallels suggest yet another way to examine the transnational network of gamelans: as a system of musical kinship. Although written notation exists, Balinese gamelan music is in large part an oral tradition, passed down from Balinese gamelan teachers to American students, who then may continue to teach other students in America. These teacher-student relationships, in which culture is passed down from one generation to the next, both culturally and biologically, create a sort of American Balinese gamelan heritage. Lasmawan’s statement that his American students in large part constitute his “next generation”—and that this is fine—indicates that he considers his students across the world to be an important part of Balinese musical heritage. American gamelan players may begin to play the music out of love for its aesthetic value. They may continue to play through love of the community that they find within gamelan ensembles. But if they continue to play long enough, they become musical and social members of the family.

Correspondingly, it is possible to represent the musical kinships of Balinese gamelan in America in the form of a family tree, one that transcends geographical boundaries and generations to constitute a Balinese gamelan musical lineage that is neither entirely Balinese nor American, but a continually dialogic mixture of the two. Mapping the entirety of musical and
biological relationships between members of the transnational Balinese gamelan community would be impossible; a simplified version of Lasmawan’s musical kinships provides an idea (see p. 249).

The question of ownership of gamelan culture is one that reaches to the heart of the history of ethnomusicological inquiry and its continued concern with cultural insiders and outsiders. The point, made in so much previous ethnomusicological scholarship (and most eloquently in the Balinese music world in Bakan 1999: 205-206), is that all practitioners of a music culture are in some ways both. Yet, issues of personal ownership (is this music mine?), representational ownership (do I have the right to be a representative of this culture to others?), and economic ownership (do I have the right to make money off of this knowledge?) are still pertinent to considering how musical cultures function within peoples’ lives.

The first two questions are the easier ones to answer. By learning and performing Balinese gamelan music, Americans have made the music part of their cultural identity. Whether or not Americans have a specific right to represent Balinese music, they do—often, in Balinese-oriented events, such as the Bangah temple ceremonies or the Bali Arts Festival. These performances are often initiated by invitations issued by Balinese musicians of standing (either locally or officially) or other parts of the Balinese governmental boards of culture. Additionally, by agreeing to work with anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, Balinese musicians are allowing these scholars to represent Balinese culture and musical lifeworlds abroad—and then, themselves, correspondingly incorporating ideas about their own culture back into their own institutions of musical pedagogy.

The answers to these two questions above lead to the more complicated question of economic ownership, a long-discussed issue within Bali due to its hefty tourist economy. In Ethnicity, Inc., John and Jean Comaroff draw attention to these interrelated questions in terms of examining ethnicity and culture as potentially economic property. Especially interesting in this situation are their discussions of “‘naturally copyrighted’ intellectual property” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 37) that permeate the book. Examining everything from the use of Native American imagery in cigarette advertisements to cultural tourism in South Africa, they draw attention the negotiations that must take place in bringing elements of ethnic cultural expression to the marketplace.
Fig. 8.2 Lasmawan's musical lineage, simplified
In large part, the Balinese government already examined that issue in terms of cultural and artistic tourism within Bali at the summits of the 1970s by setting criteria for tourist performances. Yet, the picture remains complicated in the world of music pedagogy. Local-foreign economic partnership exist in the maintenance of any number of community and teaching groups both on the Balinese side (for example, with Gamelan Çudamani and Gamelan Mekar Bhuana, with non-native organizers) and on the American side (community groups like Sekar Jaya charge fees and academic groups are supported by course tuition to pay Balinese instructors). In that Balinese and American groups largely do not compete with each other for livelihood and few Balinese openly express displeasure at foreign groups’ actions. Although American and Balinese collaborators may occasionally have differing perspectives that they must negotiate in keeping with Tsing’s concept of friction, the benefits for both American and Balinese artists, discussed throughout the dissertation, are often mutually beneficial exchanges of cultural and educational capital.

As Balinese gamelan has become an institution in America, its practitioners have indeed transformed the gamelan world into a “global village” (Rubenstein and Connor 1999), where it is not unexpected for one musician to know another who lives over a thousand miles away in a different country. The two might even have shared a same teacher, and thus be part of related musical lineages. It is these types of linkages that position gamelan society as part of an extended musical family, rather than simply a collection of gamelan-interested musicians.

8.2 Local and Global, Traditional and Cosmopolitan

Both of the models for the transnational Balinese gamelan community proposed above—viewed either as a human-ecological unit (subak) or in terms of musical kinship—suggest complex relationships between stationary and mobile conceptions of place, the nature of globalization, the meaning of tradition, and the idea of cosmopolitanism. Below, I expand upon the organizational models proposed above in terms of theoretical grounding.

The distinct gamelan sub-communities that I describe above are deeply rooted in place, both as a geographical feature and as possessing a distinct identity (Agnew 1987). Colorado Springs is different than Missoula is different than Bangah in geography and culture; moreover, they are distinct in the institutional motivations for maintaining gamelans and the resources available to do so. Yet, their identities are also shaped by mobility, both of people and ideas.
Lasmawan’s musical knowledge—accumulated through his own years of travel and study in Indonesia and the United States—passes to each group through his own travel, where it is shaped to match each individual local situation. These American groups are immeasurably changed by their members’ further study with Lasmawan at the “source,” in Bangah, which is itself being continuously shaped in ways both obvious and immeasurable by the students’ continued presence. While place serves an important role in grounding each gamelan and defining its musical and communal identity, the networks built between these location-bounded organizations continuously inform these gamelans, adding new knowledge and perspectives and transforming the groups’ life-ways and traditions.

The musical knowledge that flows through Lasmawan’s pedagogical lineage reaches a diverse range of locations and impacts a diverse population of individuals; yet, this method of musical transmission is not diffusive, but rather a carefully guided dissemination of information. Lasmawan, in partnership with each gamelan’s local leader, chooses what is appropriate to teach each semester to each group; the students, in turn, make their own choices about how to continue their study. At the end, each public performance entails another set of choices in representation—how best to demonstrate Indonesian culture as performed by each gamelan as is appropriate to the time, place, and situation of performance.

While the phrase “air mengalir” might suggest that the flow of knowledge is smooth and uninterrupted, Tsing’s ideas discussed above draw attention to the fact that the dissemination of Balinese gamelan culture is not without friction, disagreements and difficulties as different individuals and institutions must negotiate what constitutes the best way to preserve and spread this musical culture. However, drawing on the model of subaks, it is clear that such negotiations are simply part of the system. While each member of the “subak” (each individual or institutional representative within the transnational Balinese gamelan community) may have their own goals, the overall system works because these individuals both depend upon and are working to guide the flows of knowledge that are seen as integral to maintaining Balinese gamelan as a tradition and as a set of interlinked communities.

Returning to Sahlins, his idea of “structure of the conjuncture” suggests that individuals act from the basis of their cultural logic. However, despite Sahlin’s acknowledgement of interaction as a point of cultural change and adaptation, the idea that individuals might recognize the difference between their “native” social structures and those of others; that they might in part
be seeking to learn from other cultures to improve their own lives is less clear. A central element of international educational dialogues is understanding other social structures and working with other systems. Thus, the “place of awkward engagement” or the “structure of the conjuncture” is not only a space of enacting social structures, but the place of mediating structures, of learning and becoming and belonging.

Each of the decisions that members of the transnational Balinese gamelan community make shape the “tradition” of this type of musical culture. By deciding what elements of the Balinese performing arts to enact in each different location and situation, Lasmawan and others continuously renegotiate the “core” of the Balinese performing arts as a whole. While “traditional” culture is often equated with rural areas and “cosmopolitan” culture with urban ones, the stories above demonstrate how maintaining one’s own tradition and the embrace of the traditions of different cultural groups are a matter of choice within a globally interconnected society. In that college students in America are choosing to incorporate Balinese music as a part of their identities, they might be viewed as kosmopolit; in their travels to study in Indonesia, they might consider themselves to be warga dunia, citizens of the world. However, living in the village with no cell phones and no internet makes them more disconnected from modern technology than the villagers living down the road who may never have traveled more than a few miles from home. Additionally, although Lasmawan’s network of gamelans might be a highly unusual innovation from a traditional Balinese perspective, its founding and sustaining principles—musical kinship and adaptation to time, place, and situation—might be considered some of the most traditional of them all.

8.3 Time, Place, Situation: Pedagogy in a Transnational Balinese Gamelan Ecosystem

In a recent interview, Andrew McGraw was quoted as saying that “Gamelan in the U.S. is as much, if not more, a story about us than an accurate representation of Indonesian culture” (McGraw in Pellegrini 2010). I argue instead that the story is not as much about “us” and “them” as it is about how musical culture lives within the exchanges of individuals and the institutions that they build to support this culture.

The painters of the Batuan style mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation (section 1.3) generally choose to depict scenes of Balinese traditional life in their works. However, embedded within these scenes are emblems of connection to the outside world; one common inclusion is a representation of tourists photographing a cremation ceremony. Although the
lifestyle that these painters depict and the visual way in which they depict it is distinct from
others around the world, the style itself was developed in reaction to the arrival of European art
styles on the island (Vickers 2012), both its existence and its subject matter created in dialogue
with non-Balinese traditions. Musical life in America could be represented in a Batuan-style
painting, with jazz, bluegrass, Western classical orchestral traditions, hip-hop, and many other
styles each appearing in tiny scenes that flow one into the other. In one corner, there might be a
depiction of a gamelan.

How does one model the transnational Balinese gamelan pedagogical community? It
could be a kinship tree, a system of nodes and networks—or perhaps, it would be more
appropriate to borrow a metaphorical model from Balinese culture itself. Although the
organization of Balinese banjars is location-based, the subak—the layered social organizations
that govern Bali’s complex systems of rice irrigation on the local and regional level—cut across
individual banjars and desas (Geertz 1980). They are organized to ensure that the water is
distributed correctly to cultivate rice, which is not only the staple starch of Balinese diets but also
a central point of imagery in Balinese religious culture. The interconnected networks of Balinese
gamelans and their teacher-leaders could be compared to the subak, as groups of people from
different locations work to cultivate gamelan culture, ensuring that it will be perpetuated for
future generations.

There is no question that gamelan culture lives differently in America than it does in Bali,
or in any other part of the world. Like everything, gamelan pedagogy and performance must
follow the principle of desa, kala, patra. The bonds built between musicians, both Balinese and
American, and the ensembles in which they play may take on new forms, not previously found in
Balinese cultures; however, they are in many cases strong bonds nonetheless, especially those
linking teachers to their students. The continuation of Balinese arts education in Bali and abroad
is central to the mission of many musicians within both Bali and the United States; adaptation to
each local situation is necessary for this artistic lineage to continue and develop as it has on an
interlinked global level. In the words of I Madé Bandem at an address to the Bali World Culture
Forum in June 2011:

What needs to be performed is cultivating and increasing awareness that local
cultures can be an effective energy to enter the global village and global culture.
Such reality is only possible if the awareness to continuously construct dialogue
exists, in personal and communal level, between local and global, between tradition and modern (Bandem 2011: 18).

These principles are implicitly in Lasmawan’s work and that of the countless other teachers, Balinese and American, who have helped shape the transnational Balinese-American gamelan community as one in which each type of gamelan and its constituent members have a place in maintaining the health of the musical and social system as a whole. Through their continued dedication at the local level at many places across the world, these teachers have created a system of transnational educational networks that ensure that there will be a next generation of Balinese gamelan players, both in Bali and in the United States.
EPILOGUE

I am a young member of the international Balinese gamelan community. Like my North American ethnomusicologist colleagues, I am—and will be, for my entire career—both a teacher and a learner. However, among them all, I also have a distinct perspective—a gamelan player and dancer who, from the beginning, wished to learn about pedagogy. Someone who wished to understand, perhaps even more than how Balinese music or culture functioned, how and why the music and culture functioned as a dialogue between its points of origin in Bali and within non-ethnically Balinese music groups in America. As a musician, dancer, and educator, I have now become a product of the interconnected Balinese and American systems of pedagogy and performing practices. I am a product of Lasmawan’s musical lineage—and Bakan’s, and Candra’s, and to some extent those of Asnawa, Seniasih, I Ketut Kodi, I Nyoman Suasa, and the many others from whom I have learned about Balinese music, dance, and culture. I am also a product of my academic training, and the countless professors, colleagues, and friends who have influenced my thought along the way. Like those of Lasmawan and all of my other teachers, my thought and practice as a musician, teacher, and scholar is both borne of specific types of educational experiences and is uniquely my own. *Air mengalir*. Mine is one example of what the international system of Balinese musical education has wrought. The following reflections focus on how I have begun to find my place in this community and space for contributions to it in the future.

My perspective on Balinese musical performing arts traditions from the beginning was one of an outsider. I had never before been a dancer or a percussionist; at the beginning of my doctoral study, I was becoming both of them at once. I struggled at first. I could not keep my arms up in a consistent agem, and my naturally wide stance led Candra initially to declare that I would do better learning to dance male roles. Bakan, too, initially threw up his hands at my kendang-playing efforts; having never seriously tried to play a drum before, my attempts at my half of the interlocking patterns for “Rejang Dewa” were too timid to help convey his cues on the leading drum.

Additionally, Sekaa Gong Hanuman Agung—the only active gamelan of any kind in Florida and the only active Balinese gamelan within a two-days’ drive—was relatively isolated in terms of direct connections both to other Balinese-American gamelan groups as well as direct musical lineages to Bali. As a university world music ensemble, it suffered from a relatively
short collective musical memory; while a few players could remember the ensemble’s *zaman dulu*—its “once upon a time,” its more extended history—most of the members floated in and out within a few semesters, carrying their accumulated knowledge of repertoire and their skill on the instruments with them.

For me, it was looking towards the broader networks of teachers and students—traveling places, seeing different gamelans, learning from different teachers, and facing the possibility of teaching students of my own one day—that spurred my growth as a musician and a scholar. Working with Lasmawan—“Pak Madé,” as we always called him—was central to this process. One day he and I were sitting on a *balé* and having a kendang lesson. It was near the beginning of my study of the instrument and things were not going well. My hands, unused to playing for an hour at once, were bruised, the skin still abraded from yesterday’s drum practice. My ears, used to memorizing melodic lines with distinct pitches, were having a hard time putting together the rhythm of the drum strokes. My eyes almost welled with tears. I was worried that I would never become a real player, a real teacher. I stopped and said to him, “I’ll never be as good as the others,” I said, referring to my senior colleagues in ethnomusicology who worked in Bali. He said, “Yes, you can be. If you practice, if you play ten years, then you can be like Michael Tenzer, like Michael Bakan, like Andy McGraw.” It was not a consolation. It was a statement of fact.

A year later, my knowledge and my skill is still imperfect. But I learned. My teachers in Bali gave me that 100% that Lasmawan had described. I gave my own studies that 100%. And then, as the director of Gamelan Sekaa Gong Hanuman Agung for a semester, I gave my students 100%. I challenged myself to learn more and to pass on everything that I learned from my experiences and my diverse teachers; I challenged myself to build a microcosm of a community in which each person had a role, each person was challenged, and everyone felt like they belonged. And they all gave me back so much more than I could have ever expected.

The experience reaffirmed my view of the international Balinese gamelan community as just that—an ecosystem of players in which every teacher, every student, every musician, every dancer, has a role. There is no international banjar—banjars are built on personal relationships and affinity through location—but that does not mean that one can not hypothesize a *network* of local American banjars, ones that maintain personal, professional, and pedagogical ties, despite the vastness of the American continent.
It was May 6, 2013, the day after my twenty-sixth birthday, and Pak Madé and I were sitting at the coffee shop at Colorado College an hour before I leave to catch my flight back to Florida. We talk about returning to Bali in the future. Lasmawan shakes his head; it was going to be a quiet summer. He was returning home to Bangah that summer but only for about six weeks. Ketut and the kids were staying in the States. The Colorado College study abroad group did not make enrollment, it was the off-year for most of his regularly-scheduled student groups, and most of his individual students, like me, needed to wait one more year to come. The compound were being rented out for a *pencak silat* (Indonesian martial arts) retreat, but other than the few guests who would inevitably drop in, Lasmawan’s home in Bangah would be quiet. At least, finally, he would get to return to Java for a week to visit old friends.

I called him on Skype a few weeks later in June to talk about ordering a gamelan beleganjur for Emory University; even though I had only signed a one-year contract, my new colleagues had encouraged me to use some of the departmental funding to add to the university’s gamelan collection (Sundanese and Central Javanese) by purchasing a set of Balinese instruments. It was a Sunday morning for me in Tallahassee, and I tried to call after the time when the women’s gamelan will be finishing up its nightly rehearsal in Bangah. After taking care of business, we chatted a little about life in the village. He confirmed that Bangah was indeed more quiet than usual. Still, he says, I will find the village and the compound changed when I return, hopefully in the summer of 2014. The big tourist hotel out on the main road—Saranam Eco-Resort—had closed (unfortunate, Pak Madé and I agree; everyone will have to walk farther for internet access). But some changes are more positive. He told me proudly of this summer’s renovations to the compound: during the day, local workers will be remodeling the kitchen and the family *balé* (*balé dauh*), and maybe they will start to add yet another *balé* to the compound. At night, the women’s gamelan will be practicing six nights a week, as they have now for a year. Despite the doubts of some of the village men, they remained devoted even in Lasmawan’s absence, and are now the most regularly-playing gamelan in the village. He reiterates that it’s okay that I was not able to come this summer; I wouldn’t miss much, there’s not that much going on.

Of course, he’s only talking about in Bangah. Outside the compound walls, in the village of Bangah as in many other places, the island as a whole will be as ramé as usual—women rising early to head to the market, farmers working in the fields, tailors stitching kebayas on treadle
sewing machines, mask-makers carving goods for the temples and the tourists, all of them passed by a steady stream of sepeda motor traveling the small winding roads to somewhere else. In other villages, there will be odalan with cockfights and topeng dance, cremation processions winding through mountain passes accompanied by beleganjur, the deep sound of the gongs echoing across the valleys. In Kuta, tourists will surf by day, heading down to the temple at Uluwatu to watch kecak by night. In Denpasar, the ISI students will fret over their final performances, including their traditional role in opening the Bali Arts Festival. Down the road at Padang Galak, the tiny sea town will come alive as banjar-based kite flying clubs will wrestle their creations into the sky, visible over sawah and city streets all over that part of Bali. And in village homes and in sanggar all over Bali, foreigners will come to learn gamelan and dance, to capture through embodiment what has fascinated them about this vibrant culture.

Inevitably, I would miss much by not being in Bali, if not also in Bangah. But next summer, next summer is when “everything” will happen, Pak Madé says. In Bangah, there will be Gamelan Tunas Mekar and Gamelan Bintang Wahyu, Brigham Young University’s gamelan group. Lasmawan even hinted that he might enter Tunas Mekar in the Bali Arts Festival for the first time in twenty years. There will be a gathering of over one hundred barong—a sight that I can hardly imagine and can hardly afford to miss. He wants me to start playing more with the women’s gamelan, to lead them at the ceremony—an opportunity to connect more with women’s life in the community, to teach them and inevitably learn from them. And then there are my friends—old and new, American and Balinese, who I will be able to visit and play with and learn from once more. Outside of Bangah, too, there are teachers and colleagues and friends; so many people events to see, conversations to have, so many things to learn.

A few weeks later, in July, we talked again—following up on payment for the gamelan beleganjur, which should start its long trek towards Atlanta in the next few weeks. I could not contain my excitement, and the often stoic Lasmawan seemed to be excited too. I tell him that I want to fly him out sometime, but I’ll have to see, talk to people at Emory, check our schedules. “It would be really fun,” I say. “We could do a Central Javanese piece and a Balinese piece.”

“And maybe a little kecak,” he adds. Later; we’ll check on it later, when we know our schedules better. I know the scheduling will be the hard part; in addition to all of the gamelans in the Rockies, suddenly a new branch of Lasmawan’s lineage will be sprouting out in Atlanta, Georgia—in a city, in a state, in a region of the country where he’s not yet even been.
Then, it was time for me to move away from Tallahassee—difficult in large part because I would be leaving behind my own local gamelan community. Of the friends who stopped by to wish me well on my way, almost all of them had been involved with the gamelan at FSU; some had also played up north or out on the west coast. I said goodbye to Candra. After four years, her husband had finished his degree and they were returning to Indonesia. We both tried not to cry as I promise that the next time I visit Indonesia, I will come visit her. Before she left my house, she paused to gives me some last advice. “If you ever teach dance, remember, start with agem, start with walk, and then after agem and walk, then you can teach the dance. And if you ever forget, ask me or go on YouTube.” I smile. I hoped to teach dance, someday soon—and I hoped not to forget.

Atlanta—like Tallahassee, like the towns in Bali—is a city covered in trees. In the sweltering summer heat and humidity, I started to plan for the fall semester. For Emory, I’d start with two traditional Javanese pieces for which Lasmawan has taught me the basics; if the beleganjur arrived safely, I could add a basic belegangjur piece, something that I had worked on with both Bakan and Lasmawan. And then there would be the workshop at Appalachian State where Bakan and I had been invited to give a four-day series of workshops and lectures. There were few details about it yet, but I couldn’t help but dream about what it would mean to go out and work with that gamelan, to reconnect back to another portion of my gamelan community and lineage. After all, I could still remember watching that gamelan being “born”:

It is a cloudless Saturday morning in June. Even by ten o’clock Denpasar is beginning to simmer, rays of near-equatorial sunlight piercing between buildings and the trees and infiltrating Asnawa’s family compound, creating pools of heat on the dark pebble-concrete paths. We try to stand in the lingering shady areas, sheltered by the house and the family temple towers as we watch the last-minute preparations for the inaugural playing of the new gamelan gong kebyar. The gamelan sprawls among the house’s covered porches, its newly-carved, dark wooden bodies that feature scenes from Balinese folk tales nearly forgotten under the splendor of its old bronze keys. Once part of kebyars whose usefulness to their communities had come to an end, the keys had been repurposed and re-polished, and were now shining golden in the sunlight.

The building of this new gamelan marked the start not only of a new music group, but the expansion of Balinese gamelan performing traditions to new region: Appalachian State
University in Boone, North Carolina. A wealthy patron of the university had recently passed away, leaving a large sum of money to the Department of Music to be used for buying a gamelan. Laurie Semmes, professor of ethnomusicology, had been placed in charge of its acquisition and care, including being sent to Bali for a month to oversee the building and shipping process. Although her own research primarily had been focused on Eastern Europe, she had played gamelan while in graduate school at Florida State University, and thus turned to Michael Bakan for assistance. He had procured the gong kebyar for Florida State University through his mentor and friend, Asnawa, over fifteen years before. Once again, it was Asnawa who was helping to bring a new gamelan to America.

Now Asnawa was moving purposefully between the instruments, ensuring that all of the small tied-leaf offerings were correctly affixed to the instruments. Laurie hovered in the midst of them like an excited new mother: videoing, photographing, and failing to suppress the grin that kept creeping across her face. She had watched the gamelan emerge over the last few weeks from raw strips of wood and tumbles of bronze bars; now it stood straight and proud, awaiting the touch of the expert musicians who would inaugurate it and send it on its way to a new home.

One by one the musicians filtered in, all men between college age and middle age, their traditional kain and udeng paired with tee-shirts creating the illusion of matched group and visual chaos all at once. This fit their status as an ensemble—although most of them had played together with the others at some point, they were a “pickup” group, connections of Asnawa’s who were able to perform on that specific date. They sat amongst the instruments, chatting as the women of the house brought them tea and coffee as they waited for everyone to appear. When the last of the musicians arrived, the cups and saucers were pulled to the side. A few strokes on the kendang, and simultaneously twenty panggul landed on the new old keys. Although played in the open air of the courtyard, the first sound of the gamelan was enough to shake the brick walls, a golden liquid fire bursting from the previously tacit bars.

They played four pieces, demonstrating the abilities of the musicians and the stylistic capabilities of the instruments. Sweeping effortlessly through extensive passages of kotekan, the players smiled and laughed, musically at home. Family members wandered around the outdoor portions of the compound, pausing to watch the musicians and to chat. We learned later that Asnawa’s new granddaughter, just several weeks old at that point, had been peacefully asleep while the gamelan was being played, only waking up to cry when the music stopped. No one from
outside the house peered in to see what was creating all of the noise, long accustomed both to
gamelan music (and probably also its sounds emerging from that particular residence at any
given point in time). Even as Americans somewhat inured to the sound of a full gong kebyar, the
scene was breathtaking, spine-tingling. I was almost reduced to tears twice: once when the first
note was struck, and once again when the last notes faded away, the air becoming dead once
more.

After a few days, the gamelan was packed away to start its long six-week journey over to
its new home on another continent. It was easy to see the gamelan instruments as Asnawa in
particular described them—a community of different individuals, much like a human community,
that was making a long transition to a foreign place. The gamelan had been named Sekaa Gong
Mandala Giri, evoking a sacred place in the mountains, which fit perfectly with where they were
going to live—a large rehearsal room with a wall of windows that faced out into the
Appalachian Mountains. The instruments were moving from a small, mountainous island known
for the hospitality to a small, mountainous community in an area of America also known for its
hospitality. I couldn’t help but think of the instruments as truly having spirits and wondered:
despite being greatly anticipated by the university faculty and broader community, would they
feel welcome?

Residing in an American university, the instruments might never be played as well ever
again. I wondered how these metallophones, standing proud, perfect, and optimistic like soldiers
before first combat, would feel about the touch of inexpert hands, or worse, accidently being
stepped over or banged into walls by enthusiastic undergraduates—the eventual, inevitable fate
of any university world music ensemble instruments that were in active use. Would it feel
strange, being played in an enclosed concert hall by English speakers, some of whom might have
only heard the word “gamelan” for the first time several weeks before?

Or would it feel, like for so many non-Balinese who encounter Balinese gamelan for the
first time, as a strange and irresistible musical and cultural adventure? Standing in line for the
lunch provided to the musicians after the inauguration of the gamelan was completed, I
imagined that first group of individuals to sit down cross-legged behind each instrument,
runtime their hands across the carvings and listening in awed silence at hearing the keys struck
and the ombak fading away for first time. Some people might play only a few months, finding the
sounds too strange, the technique too difficult, or simply discovering other sounds that would
capture their musical imaginations. Some might play for the rest of their lives, pursuing the study of Balinese music in America or even journeying to Bali like so many foreigners had before. But, whether gamelan was a passing fancy or turned into a core component of musical identity, all who played would in some way enter this community, this family of musicians, both figurative and literal, that spans halfway across the world.

I would be among the first to play that new gamelan in its new home in North Carolina, never mind the first to teach on Emory’s new beleganjur. It made me proud and nervous—how would I live up to the legacy of my predecessors? My mother is a teacher and a musician. My father is a teacher and a musician. I had only begun my study with a number of great teachers and musicians, working in musical genres that my parents had never even experienced when I was young. Yet, here I was. I was proud of how much I had learned, but well aware of how far I had left to go. I thought about a traditional Balinese sung poem that Edmundo had once shared on Facebook:

“Eda Ngaden Awak Bisa,” Traditional Balinese Poem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eda ngaden awak bisa</td>
<td>Don’t think you can do it all; humble yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depang anake ngadanin</td>
<td>Let others name you (judge you)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaginane buka nyampat</td>
<td>Like a broom cleaning a floor (your work/karma will tell you who/what you are)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anak sai tumbug luu</td>
<td>There will always be fallen leaves (garbage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilang luu ebuk katah</td>
<td>Once the fallen leaves are gone, lots of dust remains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yadin ririh liu enu paplajahan</td>
<td>Even though you may be clever, there are still lessons to learn.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the words themselves clearly are meant to caution against hubris, I also saw a different, optimistic meaning. Your work (karma) will tell you who you are—to practice gamelan, to teach, is to become a gamelan player and a teacher. There are still lessons left to learn—but there is always much to learn, even for the cleverest. Luckily, there are still teachers willing to teach, to pass down their knowledge. Air mengelir. If we learn and we teach, if we give one hundred percent, there will always be a next generation.

38 My adaptation from various translations.
APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

5/9/12 Human Subjects <humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu>
to eac07j, mbakan, bbarton

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM (for change in research protocol)

Date: 5/9/2012

To: Elizabeth Clendinning

Address:
Dept.: MUSIC SCHOOL

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research (Approval for Change in Protocol)
Project entitled: Teachers and Learners: Building an International Gamelan Community

The form that you submitted to this office in regard to the requested change/amendment to your research protocol for the above-referenced project has been reviewed and approved.

If the project has not been completed by 4/10/2013, you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is FWA00000168/IRB number IRB00000446.

Cc: Michael Bakan, Advisor
HSC No. 2012.8353
You are invited to be interviewed about your personal experiences in teaching and/or studying Balinese traditional gamelan and dance. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an active member of this community as a student, teacher, or performer. The researcher conducting this study is Elizabeth Clendinning, a doctoral student in Ethnomusicology in the Florida State University College of Music. This interview will last for no more than thirty minutes. There may be possibilities for subsequent interviews or observation while performing Balinese gamelan or dance.

The purpose of this study is to document how Balinese traditional performing arts are studied and taught within an international community between Bali and North America. There are no particular risks to this study. Potential benefits to the participants will be potential enjoyment of discussing their opinions of musical performances. Subjects will be identified by name in published reports of this study only if they choose to be. Subjects will be audio and video recorded. The audio or video footage from this interview will be used only for non-profit, educational purposes. If the interview subjects do not wish their names or audio and visual recordings to be used in public presentations, the records of their participation in this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Florida State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have a question later, you are encouraged to contact Elizabeth Clendinning by email at eac07j@my.fsu.edu, or her faculty advisor, Professor Michael Bakan, at mbakan@fsu.edu or (850) 644-6106. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information.
_______ I consent to participate in this study.
_______ I consent to allow my name to be used in connection with this study.
_______ I consent to allow my voice and/or video to be used in connection with this study.
__________________________________________
Signature Date
FSU Human Subjects Committee approved on 5/09/2012. Void after 4/10/2013. HSC #

2012.8353
Pengajar dan Pelajar: Membangun Komunitas Internasional Gamelan: Formulir Persetujuan FSU


Partisipasi terhadap penelitian ini bersifat sukarela. Keputusan Anda untuk bersedia maupun tidak mengambil bagian tidak akan melibatkan hubungan Anda baik kini maupun di masa yang akan datang dengan Florida State University. Bila Anda memutuskan mengambil bagian, Anda bebas untuk tidak menjawab pertanyaan yang mana pun atau mengundurkan diri kapan saja tanpa mempengaruhi hubungan itu. Anda boleh menanyakan pertanyaan apapun yang Anda ingin tanyakan sekarang. Jika Anda kemudian mempunyai pertanyaan, Anda dianjurkan menghubungi Elizabeth Clendinning melalui email di eac07j@my.fsu.edu atau advisor fakultasnya, Profesor Michael Bakan, di mbakan@fsu.edu atau telpon di nomor (850) 644-6106. Bila Anda mempunyai pertanyaan atau perhatian apapun terhadap penelitian ini dan ingin membicarakan lebih jauh dengan pihak lain selain peneliti ini, Anda dianjurkan menghubungi FSU IRB di 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, atau telpon 850-644-8633, atau melalui email di humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu.

Pernyataan Persetujuan:

Saya sudah membaca informasi di atas.

_____ Saya menyetujui untuk mengambil bagian dalam penelitian ini.

_____ Saya menyetujui untuk membolehkan nama saya dipakai dalam penelitian ini.

_____ Saya menyetujui membolehkan suara saya dan/atau video saya untuk dipergunakan untuk keperluan penelitian ini.

__________________________ ________________

Tanda tangan Tanggal

FSU Human Subjects Committee approved on 5/09/2012. Void after 4/10/2013. HSC #

2012.8353
APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY

angklung Used primarily for cremations and processions, this gamelan comes in four-tone and (in Northern Bali) five-tone versions

angsel A sudden, quick musical accent or dance movement

ASKI-Surakarta Akademi Seni Karawitan Indonesia, the university-level conservatory in Surakarta; later known as ISI-Surakarta

balé An open structure within the traditional Balinese family compound

banjar Neighborhood association

baris A male dance imitative of movements of a soldier

barong A costume set representing a mythical creature; the most common type resembles a Chinese dragon

beleganjur A processional genre of gamelan with gongs, drums, and cymbals, historically used to accompany warriors into battle. In contemporary times, it is used for religious processions and in competitions

bulé White foreigners

cengceng A musical instrument that consists of small pairs of cymbals that are attached to a base

dalang A puppetmaster

desa Rural village

desa, kala, patra A Balinese Hindu philosophical statement meaning “time, place, situation”

gamelan A general word for any number of different types of Balinese percussion-based orchestras

gangsa A small metal-keyed gamelan instrument

gender wayang A four-piece gamelan in slendro tuning mostly used to accompany shadow puppet performances
gong gedé  A large type of gamelan that was popular during the Balinese courtly era. Its smaller, transitional form was called gamelan gong

gong kebyar  Invented at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is currently the most popular genre of gamelan used to perform modern concert repertoire

ISI  The university-level conservatories in Bali and in Java

jegog  A type of gamelan played on instruments made of bamboo, deriving from the West Balinese province of Jembrana

joged bumbung  A flirtatious female dance

kabupaten  Government region or district; there are eight in Bali

kaja  One of the four cardinal directions in Bali; mountainward

karawitan  A word for traditional instrumental (gamelan) music

kecak  Vocal gamelan; also called gamelan suara

kelod  One of the four cardinal directions in Bali; seaward

kendang  A drum; the leading instrument in many styles of gamelan

KOKAR/SMKI  The Balinese high school of performing arts

kota  A city

kreasi baru  “New creation;” new compositions or choreography

ngayah  Voluntary service to the temple

odalan  The anniversary celebration for a temple

pedalangan  Puppetry

pelegongan/semar pegulingan  Related varieties of old-style gamelan

pelog  One of two commonly used musical tuning systems in Bali, consisting of seven notes

polos  One of two interlocking gangsa parts

puputan  Ritual mass suicides

rangda  A mask and costume representing an evil witch character

reyong  A gamelan instrument consisting of small gongs arranged in a frame
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sanggar</td>
<td>A private club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sangsih</td>
<td>One of two interlocking gangsa parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sekaa</td>
<td>Club or society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>semaradana</td>
<td>A modern</td>
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<tr>
<td>slendro</td>
<td>One of two commonly used musical tuning systems in Bali, consisting of five notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMKI</td>
<td>Sekolah Menengah Karawitan Indonesia; the high school-level conservatory in Bali</td>
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<tr>
<td>STSI</td>
<td>Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia; the governmental college-level conservatory of the arts in Bali, now called ISI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subak</td>
<td>A society for governing the regulation of Balinese irrigation systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>ugal</td>
<td>A keyed gamelan instrument that often serves as a leader to the gangsa section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wayang (batel, kulit)</td>
<td>Puppetry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTERVIEWS

Below are the interviews to which I made direct reference in my dissertation.

Fitts, Michael. Interviewed April 8, 2013.
Hiranmayena, Putu. Interviewed April 8, 2013.
Lasmawan, I Madé.
Luna, Edmundo. Interviewed February 27, 2013.
REFERENCES


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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Elizabeth Clendinning was born in New Haven, Connecticut, and raised in Tallahassee, Florida. A multi-instrumentalist and musicologist, she holds a Master of Music in Ethnomusicology from Florida State University and a Bachelor of Arts in Music from the University of Chicago. During her undergraduate study, she was named as National Merit Finalist, a member of the Dean’s List, and accepted as a member of Phi Beta Kappa. At Florida State University, she was a recipient of the Carol K. Krebs Scholarship for ethnomusicological study. During her graduate study at Florida State University, she was additionally accepted into the Pi Kappa Lambda and Phi Kappa Phi honor societies, was awarded the Graduate Leadership Award for the College of Music, and was elected to the Florida State University Fellows Society.

She first came to study gamelan seriously at the beginning of her doctoral career at Florida State University, traveling to Bali for the first time in the summer of 2010 to study gamelan music and dance with the Gamelan Çudamani 2010. In 2011, she pursued Indonesian language study in Indonesia with funding from the U.S. Department of State’s Critical Language Scholarship. Returning to Bali in the summer of 2012, she conducted her primary research for this project with the support of a Florida State University International Dissertation Semester Research Grant. Subsequent research in the United States was funded by the Florida State University Dissertation ReseBalinee arch Grant.

Clendinning currently serves as Visiting Director of World Music at Emory University, where she coordinates the world music ensemble program, instructs the gamelan ensemble, and teaches courses in American popular music, world music cultures, Asian musical traditions, and music and religion. She previously taught courses in World Music, popular music, and American roots music at Florida State University, where she additionally served as assistant director and then director of the university’s Balinese gamelan ensemble, Sekaa Gong Hanuman Agung, at the same time coordinating the university’s Balinese dance program.

Clendinning is an active member of the Society for American Music and the Society for Ethnomusicology, for which she has served as a regional webmaster for four years. In addition to gamelan and pedagogy, her research interests include popular and vernacular musics, music in film and television, and temporal-spatial conceptions of music and culture.