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## The Art of Balinese Kendang: Drumming, Improvisation, Interaction, and Dance Accompaniment in Gamelan Gong Kebyar

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FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF MUSIC

THE ART OF BALINESE KENDANG:  
DRUMMING, IMPROVISATION, INTERACTION, AND DANCE ACCOMPANIMENT IN  
GAMELAN GONG KEBYAR

By

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(1957-2017)

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the complexities of improvisatory practices in Balinese *kendang* (drumming), focusing on solo and paired drumming styles found within the *gong kebyar* ensemble. Improvisation studies scholar Paul Berliner states that “improvisation depends, in fact, on thinkers having absorbed a broad base of musical knowledge, including myriad conventions that contribute to formulating ideas logically, cogently, and expressively” (1994, 492). Drawing from Berliner’s statement, I demonstrate how Balinese drummers think and talk about improvisation and how those cognitive and discursive processes manifest in actual performance practice. In particular, I focus on the improvisatory approaches, practices, and philosophy of the renowned *gong kebyar* drummer I Ketut Sukarata in three different contexts: paired drumming, solo drumming, and drumming for dance accompaniment.

Although several authoritative works have been written on drumming in Balinese music (e.g., Asnawa 1991; Bakan 1999; Tenzer 2000a; M. M. Hood 2001; Sudirana 2009; Tilley 2019; Pryatna 2020), most of the ethnomusicological literature to date has given little if any significant attention to the improvisational dimensions of drumming. This has resulted in a lacuna of research on improvisation in Balinese music and drumming, to the point that improvisation has come to be regarded as a relatively minor component of drumming practice, at least until very recently. However, my research and more than twenty years of performing and experiencing Balinese drumming, including seventeen years of intensive studies with Sukarata, shows that improvisation is indeed a fundamental and essential component of the art form. My research, which combines the methods of music ethnography and music-theoretical approaches, as influenced most specifically by the work of other researchers engaged with the interdisciplinary field of music scholarship known as analytical approaches to world music (e.g., Tenzer 2006a;

Tenzer and John Roeder 2011; Roeder and Tenzer 2012; McGraw 2008; 2013; McGraw and Kohnen 2016), fundamentally reconstitutes analytical methods to the study of improvisation in Balinese drumming and, by extension, in Balinese gamelan music more broadly.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Fully understanding the intricacies of improvisatory drumming in Balinese *gong kebyar* requires many years of study, performance, and analysis. In my own case, this endeavor has relied largely on a lifetime of training and experience with my primary drumming mentor, I Ketut Sukarata (also known as Tut Nang).<sup>1</sup> This dissertation project represents a pivotal point in that journey.

On a more specific level, however, the project's origin may be traced to a specific event in 2017. In November of that year, a ceremony was held in my family house in Angantaka, Abiansemal, Badung, Bali. Besides inviting dozens of people, we also had gamelan music performances, traditional chant called *pesantian*, a group of *topeng* and *rejang* dancers, and a *wayang lemah* performance, all occurring simultaneously. One of the gamelan groups consisted of young, talented students from the *karawitan* (traditional Balinese gamelan) department of Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI) Denpasar, which is the Balinese branch of the national Indonesian Institute of the Arts. Since my father, mother, and I all served on the ISI faculty, the Institute had unofficially sponsored the ceremony. This sponsorship echoed the concept of *ngayah*, the Balinese communal spirit of joining together and helping each other through offering one's talents or services.

As the host, I approached each person to extend my greetings and thank them for attending the event. I vividly remember a conversation with Ni Ketut Yuliasih, a retired lecturer from the dance department at ISI Denpasar and a renowned dancer in the *gong kebyar* genre. At

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<sup>1</sup> I will use the names Sukarata and Tut Nang interchangeably throughout this writing.

the end of the ceremony, she made an interesting comment pertaining to the phenomenological ties between drummers and dancers: “I was not facing the musicians when the *rejang* dance was performed, but in the middle of the performance, something tickled my ear. Something had changed, the *roh* or spirit of the gamelan was beckoning me to listen more closely. I noticed that the drummer drove it. ‘Why does it sound like Tut Nang?’ I wondered, and when I turned my head, my hunch was true. It was Tut Nang!” I asked her how she knew that, and she responded by saying, “I have known him for a long time; there is something distinctive in his drumming style.”

That moment struck me because I sat with Tut Nang during the *rejang* performance. He was very critical of the primary drummer of the event, a student at the time. Eventually, he gave me a sharp look and said, “*Kendang-kendangane sing kanggo to. Gedigne sing nyak megending!*” (I don’t like his drumming patterns; it’s not singing!). I was curious about this statement, so I asked him to clarify further. Rather than respond to my question using words, Tut Nang suddenly stood up from his seat and said, “Now watch!” He asked the drummer to hand over the instrument, placed the drum on his lap, and began to play. All of the musicians’ eyes immediately focused on Tut Nang, acutely aware of his charismatic presence and commanding musicianship.<sup>2</sup>

While listening to Sukarata play *rejang*, I noticed that the piece felt and sounded quite different; his drumming patterns allowed the composition to become alive through the provision of far smoother transitions and dynamics that beautifully captured the character of the dance. The

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<sup>2</sup> Ethnomusicologist and Balinese music specialist Dr. Michael Bakan also experienced Sukarata’s strong musical persona during his first encounter with him in 1992, stating that “from the first note, it was obvious to me that this man was a great player. It was there in the sound. My drummer’s sensibility immediately recognized it. He had that special musical something that immediately jumps out at you and grabs your attention and respect. The contrast between him and the other drummer who had been playing when I arrived was astonishing” (Bakan 1993, 450).

contrast between the previous drummer and Sukarata was readily apparent. Sukarata's charisma and masterful drumming technique moved the performance to a higher level with greater *taksu*,<sup>3</sup> where the musicians were in sync with his drumming patterns, creating a magnificent performance.

This event that occurred in my own home sparked a new curiosity in me. What was it about Sukarata's drumming style that commanded the attention of the musicians and audience members alike? How and why does his drumming 'sing'? Even someone like Yuliasih, a dancer with passive knowledge of music, could recognize his singular impact on a performance instantly. Up to that point, as a Balinese drummer myself, I had only considered the nature of drumming improvisation from a rather pragmatic perspective, but I now found myself thinking about these questions more explicitly. I realized that a thorough investigation of Sukarata's drumming might reveal the profound differences between technical, stylistic, and aesthetic elements of his drumming versus that of other drummers.

In this project, I undertake a detailed case study of the *kendang* (drumming) art of Sukarata as a gateway to understanding Balinese drumming practices in a broader context. Furthermore, I explore how a rhythmic instrument such as the drum has the ability to 'sing' in a performance, approaching that investigation through a three-part indigenous music theory classification system conceptualized by Sukarata himself: *meguru gending*, *meguru igel*, and *kutang-duduk*.

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<sup>3</sup> *Taksu* is a term in Bali that refers to the combination of the *sekala* (tangible) and *niskala* (intangible) elements. *Sekala* comes from the mastery of technique, achieving the proper skills required in dance, theater, or music, and *niskala* is believed to be a spirit or persona gifted from the Gods and deities. *Taksu* is the most sought-after achievement in performance because it transforms the person into the desired character in dance or constitutes the charisma of a special musician such as Sukarata, which can elevate other musicians surrounding him to a greater level of performance. *Taksu* is the power that keeps people attracted and fascinated, that gives a performance greater affective power and commands attention.

## Background

This dissertation offers a critical analysis of improvised drumming practices in Balinese gamelan *gong kebyar* music that have not yet been explored in ethnomusicological and analytical scholarship. I first survey previous scholarship on drumming in *gong kebyar* music (see Bakan 1999; Tenzer 2000b; M. M. Hood 2001; Gold 2004; Sudirana 2009; Sukerta 2009; Tilley 2019) to demonstrate the fundamental premise that the drummer has a vital leadership role in gamelan performance, in a manner somewhat analogous to that of a conductor in the Western orchestra (see Asnawa 1991, 20).

Based on its historical periodization, Balinese gamelan can be classified into three categories: gamelan *kuno* (ancient gamelan), gamelan *madya* (middle age gamelan), and gamelan *baru* (new or more recent gamelan). Examples of ensembles that are categorized in the ancient gamelan are *gambang*, *saron*, *gong luang*, *selonding*, and *gender wayang*. The ensembles within this grouping are mostly sacred and are stored in special locations inside temples. They are usually small in size and do not have a *kendang* (drum), with the exception of the gamelan *gong luang*, which does feature drumming. Even in the *gong luang* context, however, the role of the drumming is relatively limited, functioning simply to anticipate, mark, or accent *gong* strokes. It has even been argued that the *kendang* in *gong luang* functions as a colotomic—or punctuating—instrument, similar to the *gong*, rather than as a drum in the more standard Balinese sense (Asnawa 1991, 19).

Ensembles that fall within the *madya* group are *gambuh*, *semar pagulingan*, *bebarongan*, *gong gede*, and *gandrung*. These ensembles feature drums and gongs prominently, strongly suggesting that these changes were Javanese in origin. Even the bamboo gamelan *gandrung* uses ersatz gongs of resonant bamboo (Tenzer 2000a, 149.) In gamelans of this category, the drums

take on a highly significant role in leading the ensemble, providing cues and directing all changes in dynamics and tempo (Sudirana 2009, 14). Ensembles such as *bebarongan* and *gandrung* use only one drum playing in the *kendang tunggal* (solo drumming) style, while *semar pagulingan*, *gambuh*, and *gong gede* use two drums or *kendang mepasangan* (paired drumming by two drummers) style. It is important to note that in these ensembles the player of the male drum of the male-female drum pair, that is, of the *kendang lanang*, is recognized as the lead drummer and director of the ensemble.

The gamelan *baru* category consists of ensembles that originated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Among them are the *joged*, *jegog*, and *semarandana*, and, most significantly, the *gong kebyar*. In *baru* ensembles, the *kendang* drummers take a leadership role, as in their *madya* counterparts. Intricate interlocking patterns between the *lanang* and *wadon* drummer mainly define the drumming texture, and the drummers lead the ensemble with cues and tempo and dynamic changes, again as in the *madya* ensembles.

The main differences between *baru* and *madya* drumming are twofold. First, in the *baru* style of, for example, *gong kebyar*, the drummers are required to perform with *gaya*—that is, with a quality of flashy, demonstrative energy—uncharacteristic of *madya* drumming, while at the same time displaying high levels of virtuosic competence in improvisation. Second, in contrast to the primary leadership role of the male, *lanang*, drummer in *madya* traditions, it is the player of the female, *wadon* drum who leads the gamelan in *baru* ensembles like *gong kebyar*.

The *gong kebyar* ensemble consists of 35 to 40 musicians playing primarily percussive instruments. Most of the instruments are made from bronze, such as the *gangsa*, a metallophone instrument on a wooden frame; *reyong*, a set of pitched kettle gongs; and various sizes of unpitched hanging gongs known as the *gong ageng*, *kempur*, and *kemong*. The musicians use a

variety of different types of mallets—collectively called *panggul*—to strike these instruments. Several other instruments are not made from bronze, such as the *kendang*, *suling* (bamboo flute), and *rebab* (bowed chordophone). According to Pande Made Sukerta, a researcher specializing in *gong kebyar* music, the ensemble originated in Buleleng (North Bali) around the late 1800s in the villages of Ringdikit and Busungbiu, and is believed to be an evolution of an earlier five-tone *pelog gamelan*.<sup>4</sup> Sukerta was able to trace the evolution of *gong kebyar* from a journal known as *Bhawanagara*, written by Balyson from Belgium (Sukerta 2009, 65).<sup>5</sup> This ensemble spread to Tabanan, the nearest regency to Buleleng, before continuing east toward the village of Belaluan, Denpasar, in 1918.

By about 1930, that village was home to the renowned Sekaa Gong Belaluan Sad Merta.<sup>6</sup> Since its conception, this group has been directed by a single genealogical lineage of musicians. The first generation is represented by I Made Regog (composer of *Kebyar Ding*),<sup>7</sup> while his son, I Wayan Berata, who was one of Bali's most influential musicians both locally and internationally, marks the second generation.<sup>8</sup> Finally, I Ketut Sukarata represents the third and most recent generation.<sup>9</sup> All of these musicians are or were great composers and drummers, and

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<sup>4</sup> There are two types of tuning systems in Bali: *pelog* and *slendro*. *Pelog* is a seven-tone system with many five-tone derivatives. In *pelog*, the pitches are separated from each other by a series of non-equidistant intervals. *Slendro* is a five tone per octave system in which the intervals between the various pitches are roughly equidistant.

<sup>5</sup> Prior to Sukerta's research, many scholars argued that *gong kebyar* emerged around 1914-1915 (see Tenzer 2000a; Gold 2004). In his research, Sukerta has pointed out that in 1914 there were already several villages with the ensemble and already having *mebarung* performances. Thus, I agree with Sukerta that *gong kebyar* was created before 1914.

<sup>6</sup> Sekaa Gong Belaluan Sad Merta was one of the earliest groups from Bali that performed abroad. For more information on this group see Yudha 2005; 2012b; 2012a.

<sup>7</sup> The *Kebyar Ding* piece was recorded in 1928 by Odeon and Beka subsidiaries of the German conglomerate Lindstrom, and the Russian-born German artist and musician Walter Spies has been credited with having chosen and organized the gamelan (instrumental ensembles) and singers (Herbst 2019, 350).

<sup>8</sup> One of the most influential musicians in Bali, I Wayan Berata's life and musicianship journey has been documented by Senen (2002) and Darma Putra (2014).

<sup>9</sup> Sukarata had an older brother named I Wayan Sudama. He was also a drummer and director of the Sekaa Gong Sad Merta prior to Sukarata. Unfortunately, Sudama passed away at a young age and did not have any direct drumming students; therefore, it is difficult to trace the lineage of his drumming style. I have only heard stories from Sukarata about Sudama. By Sukarata's report, his brother would often become *marah* (angry). He could be very

in *gong kebyar* groups, the drummers are the unquestioned leaders and artistic directors of the ensemble. As Tenzer explains regarding the drummer's role,

The experience of performing on the lead *kendang* in Balinese gamelan is one of exhilaration and responsibility. All members of the group seek clarification and reassurance that the music is proceeding as it should by listening carefully for important drum cues and by establishing eye contact with the drummer when possible. The drummer must be fluent enough with his part that most of his energy can be directed towards monitoring the group, constantly checking to make sure that things don't go awry. If there is a dancer, the *kendang* acts as intermediary, translating key dance movements into musical impulses with deftly placed strokes that send messages in a flash to the ensemble. The drummer communicates the essence of the music in sound, bearing, and gesture. (Tenzer 1991, 49).

In addition to their participation as performing musicians, drummers also dictate the order and nature of procedures in rehearsals and performances. In terms of technique (including improvisation skills) and leadership, only highly acclaimed musicians will be trusted to act as a drummer.

There are two types of drumming in the *gong kebyar* ensemble: solo drumming (*kendang tunggal*) and paired drumming (*kendang pemasangan*). Most scholarship that discusses improvisation focuses on the solo drumming context. I Wayan Sudirana, a Balinese musician, drummer, and ethnomusicologist, explains that drummers in Bali use the term *bebas*, or freedom, to describe the act of improvisation in solo drumming. Furthermore, he mentions that even though *bebas* implies the freedom of choice to play various patterns, it is rarely used as an invitation to actually create spontaneous patterns at the time of performance; rather, it refers to a recreation or recycling of stock phrases based on the drummers' rhythmic vocabulary (see Sudirana 2009). Expanding upon this research, I analyze how Sukarata performs his particular style of solo drumming improvisation when dancers accompany the music.

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strict and demanding, and was known to be very intense and energetic. In Sukarata's recollection, this personality could impact Sudama's drumming, causing him to play with excessive power and sometimes ahead of the beat. Sukarata describes this kind of playing as *ngamuk* (playing in rage).

Improvised drumming within the context of *kendang mepasangan*, on the other hand, has received very little attention in scholarship, thus creating a rich area of potential inquiry that my study aims to address to an unprecedented degree.<sup>10</sup>

### **Purpose and Significance**

How and why do Balinese drummers improvise?<sup>11</sup> To answer this question, I theorize the complexities of Balinese drumming improvisation in the *gong kebyar* ensemble through analytical investigations of the practice of I Ketut Sukarata. Sukarata has become a household name among drummers in Bali, a name representative of exemplary artistry and musical intelligence. His style of improvisation has become the benchmark for many musicians throughout the island and even globally. As an ethnomusicologist and a drummer who has been studying under the mentorship of Sukarata, I further the discourses surrounding Balinese drumming by providing a deeper level of understanding. As noted, my analysis covers three aspects of drumming improvisation: *meguru gending*, *kutang-duduk*, and *meguru igel*, each of which is defined and discussed below.

The concepts of *meguru gending* and *meguru igel* are mainly applicable to solo drumming. In this context, ‘*meguru*’ means teacher and refers to a guidance method; ‘*gending*’ means piece, melody, or repertoire; and ‘*igel*’ means dance. Thus, *meguru gending* is a method for choosing and creating drum patterns that will fit with a specific melody and colotomic

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<sup>10</sup> Only the *batu-batu* style of paired improvisational drumming has been given adequate attention in this regard (see Bakan 1999; Tenzer 2000a).

<sup>11</sup> Benjamin Brinner’s (1995) *Knowing Music, Making Music: Javanese Gamelan and the Theory of Musical Competence and Interaction* inspired this question. The book was based on his investigation of musical competence and interaction in Javanese gamelan. At the beginning of his book, he phrases the question as “How do musicians know what they know?” (1).

markings (see Sadguna 2019), while *meguru igel* is a method for drummers to react and anticipate movements in dances that do not have a fixed choreography.<sup>12</sup>

The various roles of the Balinese drummer share many similarities with that of the Javanese drummer relative to the *dhalang* (puppeteer) and gamelan musicians in Javanese *wayang* (shadow puppetry) performances (Brinner 1995, 22). The drummer functions as a key intermediary between the dancer and gamelan, providing cues, guiding the other musicians through various tempo and volume changes, and starting and stopping the gamelan at the dancer's command. In addition to these coordinative functions, the drummer amplifies the dancer's movement with sound effects, which requires that he anticipate the dancer's moves.

As I have mentioned earlier, scholars often fail to discuss improvisation in the context of paired drumming, which leads one to incorrectly assume that it does not exist to any significant degree. However, according to Sukarata, it is present in the form of *kutang-duduk*, a method of collective improvisation for paired drumming in the *gong kebyar* ensemble.<sup>13</sup> '*Kutang*' means to throw, while '*duduk*' means to pick up, so his concept emphasizes how drummers creatively change basic paired drumming patterns by manipulating and transforming sounds, anticipating their partner's strokes, and syncopating rhythms in unpredictable ways.

Until such concepts and practices of improvisation are theorized and systematically constructed, the concept of Balinese drumming improvisation will be only partially understood. Hence, the purpose of my research is to reveal how various concepts of improvisation are at play

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<sup>12</sup> Balinese colotomic markings can also be understood as meters. According to Tenzer, Balinese colotomic meter "refers to the sequence of *gongs* that punctuate individual cycles in court and court-derived repertoires, and extends to include any drumming and changes in intensity, dynamic, and tempo that are linked to the meter generically, as opposed to being a feature of a specific composition" (Tenzer 2000a, 254). A meter can be determined by scrutinizing the strokes of the *gong*, *kempur*, *kajar*, and *kemong*.

<sup>13</sup> The idea of collective improvisation is inspired by Tilley (2009). She talks about drummers in the *pearjan* ensemble being able to simultaneously improvise between each other while still being able to interlock.

and to do so specifically in relation to Sukarata's drumming style. Its significance lies in the construction of a comprehensive and fundamental framework for understanding Balinese drumming improvisation while simultaneously providing a more precise and thorough knowledge of Balinese gamelan in general, most especially relevant to its most widely known genre, the gamelan *gong kebyar*. This research builds on the full range of scholarly literature on Balinese gamelan to date, while making an especially significant contribution in its continuation of the tradition of Balinese and Indonesian scholars trained in ethnomusicology in North American universities, who have contributed invaluable to the literature in offering new ways of understanding gamelan music from an insider's perspective (e.g., Sumarsam 1975; Asnawa 1991; Sumarsam 1995; Rai S 1996; Wenten 1996; Sudirana 2009; 2013; Kartawan 2014).

### **Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework**

Improvisation in music has become an important topic of scholarly discourse among ethnomusicologists, yet limited attention has been devoted to exploring the complexities of Balinese improvisational drumming practices within the *gong kebyar* ensemble. In this section, I discuss existing literature on Balinese drumming to show how this dissertation is both informed by and represents a departure from those works. Additionally, I discuss other kinds of improvisational practices—especially in relation to Balinese instruments other than drums, Javanese gamelan instruments, and non-Indonesian genres such as American jazz—to establish a broader theoretical framework for my research and to situate my work within the larger scope of music improvisation studies.

One of the earliest studies on Balinese drumming was conducted by I Ketut Gede Asnawa in his master's thesis titled "The Kendang Gambuh in Balinese Music" (1991). As an

insider of the culture, Asnawa's research focuses on the different types of *tabuh* drumming patterns within the *pegambuhan* genre in Bali. Although Asnawa's study does not discuss drumming improvisation, his work provides a method for notating and analyzing Balinese *kendang* patterns, which influenced how I write my transcriptions.

The most directly relevant study on Balinese drumming improvisation for the *gong kebyar* ensemble was conducted by I Wayan Sudirana in his master's thesis titled "Kendang Tunggal: Balinese Solo Drumming Improvisation" (2009). Sudirana juxtaposes improvised drumming patterns from six different renowned Balinese drummers. His analysis was based on recordings by Michael Tenzer conducted during fieldwork in Bali from 1982–1987. His work is valuable because it is one of the only scholarly studies that provides an in-depth musical analysis on solo drumming practices from the perspective of a Balinese scholar and an accomplished drummer.

In his research, alluded to earlier, Sudirana talks about the notion of *bebas*, or freedom, that is used among Balinese drummers, noting that in reality many drummers do not use the opportunity to create spontaneous patterns at all; instead, they recycle or reuse patterns they have practiced and make a new ordering of well-rehearsed stock phrases (see Sudirana 2009, ii). In my research, the idea of *bebas* is similar to Sudirana's notion, where drummers maintain a sense of freedom in specific sections of a piece by playing various types of patterns that they have learned beforehand, usually in a spontaneous order. However, they still demonstrate constraints within their conceptual framework, and each drummer has their unique preference and style.

Therefore, to gain a deeper and more holistic understanding of Balinese drumming, I have chosen the case study approach outlined, focusing on Sukarata. My research is based on ethnographic fieldwork, including working with and taking lessons from Sukarata as well as

interviewing other drummers and dancers. While Sudirana only focuses on solo drumming, my research regarding the art form goes a step further, exploring other dimensions of drumming practices. My research is threefold: I explain the intricacies of solo drumming practices, investigate the aspect of collective improvisation in paired drumming, and then focus on the interactions that occur between dancer and drummer in the *Jauk Keras* dance.

My research is influenced by Leslie Tilley's 2019 book *Making It Up Together: The Art of Collective Improvisation in Balinese Music and Beyond*, which discusses the idea of collective improvisation as it relates to *arja* drumming and the *norot* technique for reyong. As she defines it, collective improvisation involves "some or all members of a group participating in simultaneous improvisation of equal or comparable weight" (2019, 6). Based on existing literature, one might assume that collective improvisation does not exist in the *gong kebyar* ensemble, with the exception of the *batu-batu* style of drumming. This style is used for *kendang cedugan*, drums played with mallets. The literature on *gong kebyar* has not included discussions on collective improvisation for paired hand drumming, leading, again, to the assumption that it does not occur. Several references note that in paired hand drumming the *lanang* drummer basically plays the same patterns as the *wadon* drummer, but a "sixteenth note" earlier or later (see Bakan 1999; Tenzer 2000a). This rhythmic texture is called *nutug*. Although this is partially correct, there is another layer of competence and complexity through which both drummers improvise simultaneously. My experience studying with Sukarata at the most advanced level has shown me that drumming is an art of collectiveness. He calls this *kutang-duduk*, referring to the ways two competent partner drummers conduct simultaneous improvisatory practices, challenging each other through a literal "give-and-take" (*kutang-duduk*) process that generates sophisticated, often unpredictable interlocking patterns.

In understanding how the drummer-dancer relationship works, I refer to six works. One of the earliest works that discusses the topic of Balinese dance is a book written by Beryl de Zoete and Walter Spies in 1939 called *Dance and Drama in Bali*. This book was based on the authors' experiences in Bali and documentation of music, dance, and theatre activities during the 1930s, during which time they travelled throughout the island and documented various performances and genres. This book is important for two reasons. First, it covers key historical information about many Balinese dances, including the *jauk* and *kebyar* dances that are focal points of this dissertation. Second, in the introductory chapter, the authors talk about the relations between music and dance. Their emphasis was on how the drummer plays an important role as the leader and interpreter of the dance. In their book, they did not show clearly how the drummer leads the ensemble. In a sense, then, my work in this study takes their discussions as a point of departure as I delve far more deeply into the distinctive role of drummers and drumming in the dance-music relationship.

The second work is my 2010 publication, *Kendang Bebarongan dalam Karawitan Bali: Sebuah Kajian Organologi*. This book is based on my undergraduate studies of the organological aspects of *kendang bebarongan*.<sup>14</sup> In addition to exploring the processes of making a *kendang bebarongan*, I also explain how a drummer accompanies the *barong* dance (see Sadguna 2010). I use the same principles of the drumming-dancing relationship as articulated in my earliest work and apply them to my analysis of the *Jauk Keras* dance.

The third work referred to is a master's thesis written by Kurt Schatz in 2020 titled "Relations of Music and Dance in Balinese Jauk Keras." Schatz's thesis focused on the

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<sup>14</sup> *Kendang bebarongan* is categorized as a medium size drum. It is one of the nine types of drums in Balinese music (see Sadguna 2010).

interaction between drummer and dancer, understood through a case study of *Jauk Keras*. As he conducted this research, I was one of his primary interlocutors. Schatz's project managed to articulate the basic ideas of the drummer-dancer relationship. Although our research objectives are similar, I intend to explore these matters far more deeply, shed light on the nuanced nature of certain subtle dance movements and complex drumming patterns while demonstrating how the drummer becomes an intermediary between the dancer and the dancer ensemble.

The fourth influential publication related to dancer-drummer interaction is a 2012 article by John Roeder and Michael Tenzer titled "Identity and Genre in Gamelan *Gong Kebyar*: An Analytical Study of *Gabor*." This article discusses various musical elements that form the *gabor* dance in Balinese gamelan *gong kebyar*. The authors explain the different instrumentation types used in this piece, including their melodic functions and colotomic structures. One of the interesting features of this article is its use of a unique notation system to explain how dance and music work side by side. By juxtaposing the melody and drum patterns with the specific dance movements, the authors provide a notational method that accurately conveys the profound relationship between music and dance. This is the first time I have seen a transcription method used for Balinese performance. While Roeder and Tenzer transcribed the performance of a pre-composed piece, I intend to analyze the *Jauk Keras* dance, which does not have a fixed choreography. Nonetheless, their work provided a model for me in notating the interaction between the *Jauk Keras* dancer and drummer in my research.

In his 1991 publication entitled *Balinese Music*, specifically in Chapter 5, Tenzer provides a detailed discussion of how gamelan music accompanies and interacts with dancing in the *Baris* dance. Although this is a different dance from *Jauk Keras*, the two share many similarities, key among them being their common reliance on improvisatory elements. Tenzer

emphasizes the role of the drummer in anticipating and responding to the dancer's cues (*angsels*) and explains how the form of the dance is ultimately shaped by the colotomic structure of the piece. I have adapted Tenzer's mode of analysis on these levels to my consideration of drumming-dance-gamelan interrelationships in *Jauk Keras*.

The final two sources consulted in exploring music-dance relationships are a pair of articles by Made Hood: "Persistent Mutualisms: Energizing the Symbiotic Relationship Between Balinese Dancer and Drummer" (2017) and "Separating Intertwined Traditions into Balinese Music and Dance" (2020). Both articles discuss the relationship of music and dance in Balinese performing arts. Hood describes the symbiotic relationship between the vocabulary of movement of a Balinese dancer and the vocabulary of the *gupekan* drumming as a circumstance of 'persistent mutualisms,' which focuses on the concept of *ngunda bayu* (energy-distribution system). A significant part of the discussion focuses on the importance of the dancer's understanding of the music, on the one hand, and of the drummer's knowledge and comprehension of the dance, on the other. It is crucial for a drummer to have a deep understanding of the dance movements and forms, especially in accompanying an improvisatory dance such as the *Jauk Keras*.

Two of the most extensive studies of the *gong kebyar* ensemble are *Gamelan Gong Kebyar: The Art of Twentieth-Century Balinese Music* (2000a), by Michael Tenzer, and *Gong Kebyar Buleleng: Perubahan dan Keberlanjutan Tradisi Gong Kebyar* (2009), by Pande Made Sukerta. These works discuss the history, instrumentation, and repertoire of the *gong kebyar* ensembles. Tenzer specifically dedicates his seventh chapter to explaining the role and practices of the drummer, including discussions of drumming patterns, improvisation, syntaxes, and dance accompaniment. Tenzer's explanation provides an excellent introduction to understanding

drumming. Still, it does not account for how drummers can accompany non-fixed dance choreography or the processes of collective improvisation in the context of paired drumming, both of which are discussed in my research.

In *Music of Death and New Creation: Experiences in the World of Balinese Gamelan Beleganjur* (1999), Michael Bakan explores the different contexts of gamelan *beleganjur* performance in Bali's social-cultural milieu. There are two important points gained from this publication. First, Bakan speaks about *batu-batu* drumming in *beleganjur*, a type of collective improvisation within the ensemble. This drumming technique influences the style and approach of paired drumming in the *gong kebyar* ensemble, a connection that will be explained at length in my research. Second, Bakan and I share the same main informant, Sukarata. In his book, Bakan narrates his experience in learning *beleganjur* and drumming with Sukarata as a form of interaction and negotiation. My research can be understood as a continuation of Bakan's work as I aim to expand upon his discussions of Sukarata's artistry and musical philosophy within the context of improvisational drumming practices. Although I do not include the *beleganjur* genre in my project, Bakan's work regarding Balinese society and gamelan musical culture, in particular his discussions of the student-teacher relationship, remains vital to my research objectives.

Additionally, several other scholars of Balinese music have examined drumming improvisation, albeit at a relatively rudimentary level. These include Hood (2001) and Tilley (2019) on *arja* drumming and, as mentioned, several scholars on *batu-batu* drumming (Bakan 1999; Tenzer 2000a; Sukerta 2009). My research also relies on publications that examine Balinese gamelan more broadly (see McPhee 1964; Rai S 1996; Tenzer 1991; 2000a; 2006a; Gold 2004; McGraw 2005; 2008; 2013).

Thus far in this review, I have focused on literature that investigates Balinese drumming and musical practices in particular. While that literature provides the primary foundation for my studies, my research also ventures into other areas of music improvisation studies, such as Javanese music studies and discourses on improvisation in musicology, to fully contextualize how Balinese drummers think, act, and play in the moment. Reviewing the literature on Javanese music is necessary because Bali's gamelan tradition descends from that of Java, and there are key concepts of improvisation shared between the two cultures.

A pioneer of improvisation studies in Indonesia's performing arts was Hardja Susilo. In his article "Improvisation in Wayang Wong Panggung: Creativity within Cultural Constraints" (1987), Susilo notes that the word *improvisasi*, which is now commonly used in Indonesia, comes from the West. In Javanese, there are terms such as *kembangan*, *isen-isen*, *nggladrah*, *ngambang*, *sambang rapet*, and *ngawur*, which, when translated into English, all refer to the idea of improvisation. He claims that the adoption of the term 'improvisation' was based on admiration of modernization and Western culture, even though local Javanese terms are more suitable for use in describing certain improvisatory practices and processes (Susilo 1987, 11). In my preliminary research, many musicians referred to playing improvised drumming as *bebas*, or freedom. As noted, this idea of freedom is not absolute because there are still certain idioms and rules, or *pakem*, which, according to Sukarata, must be followed. Inspired by Susilo's work, I am intrigued to identify local concepts used to describe Balinese drumming improvisatory practices.

Other significant works on Javanese gamelan include studies by Sumarsam and Marc Perlman. Sumarsam's coining of the term "inner melody" in his article "Inner Melody in Javanese Gamelan Music" (1975) was revolutionary in Javanese musicological studies as it directly opposed Jaap Kunst and Mantle Hood's theory of *balungan* as the *cantus firmus* or

nuclear theme of the Javanese gamelan melody (see Kunst 1973; M. Hood 1977). Further descriptions of this concept can also be found in Sumarsam's book, *Gamelan: Cultural Interaction and Musical Development in Central Java* (1995). His work redefined how ethnomusicologists approach the concept of melody and composition in Javanese gamelan. Similar to Sumarsam, Marc Perlman discusses "unplayed melody" in his book, *Unplayed Melodies: Javanese Gamelan and the Genesis of Music Theory* (2004). Perlman's research aims to clarify the role of the *balungan* in Javanese gamelan and determine which musical layer is considered to be the melody as Javanese musicians perceive it. Although *balungan* can be understood as a skeletal framework, it does not define the actual melody in the musicians' minds.

Both of these works show the cognitive processes that form the musical creativity of an individual, including the ways instrumentalists playing the *rebab*, *bonang*, *gender*, and *kendhang* (the Javanese spelling for drum) improvise based on their perceptions of what they hear as the melody and the colotomic structure. This framework can also be applied to Balinese drumming, where, according to Sukarata, each piece has its own character base that is affected by a distinct melody and structure. In this context, the drummer must carefully choose patterns that are considered suitable for that piece while also paying attention to the cyclical gong structures.

The studies of musical competence and interaction in Javanese gamelan are at the heart of Benjamin Brinner's work titled *Knowing Music, Making Music: Javanese Gamelan and the Theory of Musical Competence and Interaction* (1995). Brinner raises a critical question in the book, which is "how do musicians know what they know?" (1). According to Brinner, the answer lies in examining the musicians' competence and interactions with one another. Furthermore, Brinner defines musical competence as the "individualized mastery of the array of interrelated skills and knowledge that is required of musicians within a particular tradition or

musical community and is acquired and developed in response to and in accordance with the demands and possibilities of general and specific cultural, social, and musical conditions” (28) and that it is represented through the “interaction between musicians that competence is attained, assessed, and altered” (3). These two concepts provide a gateway for investigating what makes Sukarata’s drumming style unique. The skills and knowledge that have enabled him to become one of Bali’s maestro drummers are the results of decades’ worth of training, performing, teaching, experience, and interaction that have wholly shaped his competence and reputation among Balinese musicians.

Drumming improvisation and interaction are among the three main points discussed by Henry Spiller in his book *Erotic Triangles: Sundanese Dance and Masculinity in West Java* (2010). Spiller’s tripartite theory, which he calls the erotic triangle of Sundanese dance, consists of the female performers known as *ronggeng*, the drumming accompaniment, and the male amateur dancers. Spiller mentions a following and leading relationship between dancer and drummer in West Javanese performance, which also occurs in a similar fashion in Balinese performance. The drummer is considered the leader of the musical ensemble and the translator of the dancer’s movements into musical accents. Spiller’s work has also become influential in my analytical understanding the mutual dancer-drummer relationship.

In discussing musical improvisation, it is important to become critically engaged with scholarship in the broader realm of musicology. One of the earliest ethnomusicologists concerned with musical improvisation was Bruno Nettl. In his article “Thoughts on Improvisation: A Comparative Approach” (1974) and his introduction to the edited volume *In the Course of Performance: Studies in the World of Musical Improvisation* (1998), Nettl expounds upon both the importance of improvisation in music and its historical marginalization

in musicological scholarship. This marginalization, he argues, has been due to the biased assumption that composition is synonymous with a piece of pre-composed music notated on a score with preparation and calculation and that this type of composition is more highly valued than what emerges from the less premeditated, spur-of-the-moment, spontaneous processes of composition associated with improvisational creations (Nettl 1974, 4).

Nettl strongly disagrees that composition of the former type is superior to its improvisational counterpart, illustrating how in some cultures, such as those of the Middle East, improvisation is considered more prestigious (Nettl 1998, 8). Instead of debating the presence or absence of notation as a criterion to justify composition or improvisation, Nettl posits that both exist on a continuum, separated not by type but rather by the degree of spontaneity. They are the embodiment of a system, which consists of units that he calls ‘building blocks,’ which are “what musicians within the tradition make use of, choosing from among them, combining, recombining, and re-arranging them. These building blocks are, even within a single repertory, of many different orders” (Nettl 1974, 14).

The idea of building blocks, which suggests a multilevel process that must be learned and practiced in order to achieve a sufficient knowledge base, can be applied quite clearly to the case of improvised drumming in Bali. To improvise fluently, one must understand the various available building blocks, such as the different timbres and drum phrases, that can be employed before a complete drum pattern can be constructed. By building upon Nettl’s models of improvisation, I investigate the unique yet collectively grounded forms of improvisatory practice used by Balinese drummers within the three-part categorical framework of *meguru gending*, *meguru igel*, and *kutang-duduk* that Sukarata employs in his discourse on drumming improvisation.

Another important theorist who focuses on the topic of music improvisation is Philip Alperson, as exemplified in his two articles, “On Musical Improvisation” (1984) and “A Topography of Improvisation” (2010). Alperson offers a topography of improvisation that encompasses three elements: spontaneity and freedom, skills, and the social dimension (see Alperson 2010). He states that improvisation is present when we notice a degree of spontaneous music-making (Alperson 1984, 17). However, he notes that improvisation is not a wholly free or autonomous activity; rather, it depends fundamentally on routines, rituals, and practiced activities. In jazz, Alperson mentions that musicians “learn to assimilate musical ‘rules’ such as those concerning the appropriateness of certain scalar patterns to certain harmonic progressions, either explicitly, through a study of ‘music theory’ or, less methodically, by developing an ‘ear’ for the accepted idioms which the rules describe” (Alperson 1984, 22). The notion of “accepted idioms” is unique to each culture, and Balinese drumming is no exception.

Due to its unique improvisational aspects, jazz performance has also become an essential part of this research and inspired my thoughts on Balinese drumming. There are many scholarly publications on jazz (see Gabbard 1995; Monson 1996; Gushee 1998; Jackson 2012), but Paul Berliner’s *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (1994) has been especially relevant to my research. In his first chapter, Berliner rejects the definition of improvisation provided by Webster’s New World Dictionary, which states that “to improvise is to compose, or simultaneously compose and perform, on the spur of the moment and without any preparation” (1). He quotes jazz musician Arthur Rhames to illustrate his position. According to Rhames,

Improvisation is an intuitive process for me now, but in the way in which it’s intuitive.... I’m calling upon all the resources of all the years of my playing at once: my academic understanding of the music, my historical understanding of the music, and my technical understanding of the instrument that I’m playing. All these things are going into one concentrated effort to produce something that is indicative of what I’m feeling at the time I’m performing. (Rhames in Berliner 1994, 16)

Following from this, Berliner asserts that “Rhames’s explanation makes clear that the popular conception of improvisation as ‘performance without previous preparation’ is fundamentally misleading. There is, in fact, a lifetime of preparation and knowledge behind every idea that an improviser performs” (Berliner 1994, 17).

I strongly agree with the notion that improvising is not instantaneous, unprepared music-making: it requires prior thought, study, and a great deal of innovation and creation to make immediate decisions. Mastering the art of improvisation requires the musician to comprehend musical structure and vocabulary as a second language. This can be achieved by imitating other musicians by watching live performances or listening to recordings to learn and acquire their complex vocabulary. To master technically advanced passages, many musicians divide them into “smaller parts,” just as they might learn “long words by studying their syllables separately and recombining them” (Berliner 1994, 96) or, in Nettl’s words, by learning the building blocks. In the same way, Balinese drummers usually start with small and short phrases and slowly build up their vocabulary as they develop their skills. Once they create a large vocabulary bank from which to pull ideas, they will be able to speak the language; eventually, an improvisational segment has the potential to be conceived as a rhythmic conversation.

In the epilogue, Berliner concludes that “improvisation depends, in fact, on thinkers having absorbed a broad base of musical knowledge, including myriad conventions that contribute to formulating ideas logically, cogently, and expressively” (Berliner 1994, 492). Improvising is a complex and intricate process. It is influenced by social aspects, such as where the person grew up and their experiences related to their upbringing, affiliations with certain bands or institutions, and educational processes (formal and informal). The musical element of the phenomenon demands an acute understanding of certain musical structures and idioms, and

the ability to mimic and reinvent other musicians' signature licks. Berliner's idea of how improvisatory practices are formed and gained is applicable in many cultures, including Balinese improvisational drumming.

With regard to the analytical aspects of my research, my work is inspired by a group of ethnomusicologists/music theorists that have joined together to form Analytical Approaches in World Music (AAWM), which is part of the special interest group of Music Analysis within the Society of Ethnomusicology and also has a journal published under the same name. Two works that emerged from this organization and influenced my work are *Analytical Studies in World Music* (2006), edited by Michael Tenzer, and *Analytical and Cross-Cultural Studies in World Music* (2011), edited by Michael Tenzer and John Roeder. Analysis is a vital part of understanding music. According to Tenzer, "we submit that analysis is a path to musical awareness and better musicianship. Our purpose is to make the diverse systems of musical thought under consideration available for creative musicians looking for an informed basis on which to know assimilate, model, or borrow" (Tenzer 2006a, 5).

Furthermore, Tenzer states that the purpose of musical analysis is "to demonstrate or inspire compositional depth or ingenuity, to discover an archetypal sound-structure model on which a music or repertoire is based, to symbolize or reflect a philosophy, social value or belief, to reveal a historical process of change, to unearth unsuspected connections to music elsewhere, to embody a mathematical principle" (Tenzer 2006a, 7). AAWM uses transcription of music that is not traditionally notated, or works with existing notations from new perspectives, as a tool for analysis in order to gain a comprehensive knowledge of specific musical systems and their musicultural components. I take a similar methodological path, investigating Sukarata's drumming patterns by combining traditional Balinese analytical methods with approaches

inspired by musics outside of Bali, including Javanese gamelan, Western art music, jazz, and West African drumming. It is my hope that transcription and notation will help to provide a systematic way of understanding how Balinese drummers improvise.

In this section, I have situated the theoretical approach of this dissertation within the broader framework of musicological and music-theoretical literature. By building upon indigenous musical practices and musicological scholarship by Indonesian scholars and performers of both Bali and Java, I provide an emic framework for contextualizing my research within these convergent lines of music theory and practice. Moreover, by integrating this emic foundation within a larger framework on studies of gamelan and improvisation by Western scholars, as well as a broad-based literature on the study of improvisation, I am able to approach this work in a manner that both honors Indonesian music and music scholarship, and has relevance for broader frameworks of study in the investigation of global musical processes of improvisation.

## **Methodology**

While the formal fieldwork for this research began during my studies as a doctoral student at Florida State University in 2019, the preparation for the project dates back to 2004, my third year of high school. That year, I participated in a drumming competition among students in Denpasar and began studying with Sukarata. My preparation for the competition was very minimal: I only had two weeks from my first drum lesson until the day of the competition. Nonetheless, I was able to achieve a fourth-place ranking. After graduating from high school, I decided to continue my studies at ISI Denpasar, majoring in *karawitan*. To develop a more mature understanding of Balinese gamelan, I began private drumming lessons with Sukarata.

Playing the *kendang* requires a comprehensive knowledge of all the other instruments as well; it is considered the highest-level instrument of the ensemble.

During our lessons, whenever I asked Sukarata about a particular pattern, he would reply by saying, “*Apa gendingne Dé?*” (What is the piece, Dé?).<sup>15</sup> I would respond, “*Ten patuh pupuhne pak?* (Aren’t the patterns the same for every song?). Sukarata would always answer, “*Sing dadi patuh baang gedigne, gendingne melenan, ada kempur, kemong, gong, sing dadi ngawag*” (You can’t use the same patterns for any piece, because each piece has a specific melody and colotomic structure constituted by the strokes of the *kempur*, *kemong*, and *gong*). It was a challenging concept to digest, and at the time I assumed I could just mimic any pattern that he gave me with the hope that I would be able to discern his more profound conceptual thoughts in the future. During lessons, I would record his playing style using either a video recorder, audio recorder, or my cell phone. Occasionally after lessons we would go to *warungs* (food or drink stalls), or malls, or to visit his friends. I would ride my motorbike with him most of the time because Denpasar is known for its bad traffic and the bike proved to be a faster option than a car. Our conversations over meals, his discussions with his friends about music, and his teachings in *banjars*<sup>16</sup> convinced me that he had a specific, profound conceptual framework for improvisational practices in Balinese drumming.

The official fieldwork for this dissertation started in 2019, my first year as a doctoral student and Fulbright Fellow at Florida State University (FSU). To understand various musical cultures of the world, I took numerous ethnomusicology courses and familiarized myself with the literature in the field, paying special attention to studies on improvisation. Since my studies at

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<sup>15</sup> Dé is short for Madé, which is a name usually used for the second or sixth born child in the family. Sukarata calls me by Dé or Madé; he has rarely called me by my common name, Indra.

<sup>16</sup> *Banjar* is a Balinese word meaning neighborhood. It is the smallest form of local government in a designated area, based on traditional communal values and culture.

FSU were sponsored by the Fulbright-DIKTI program for only three years, I have had to use my time carefully to complete my doctoral degree within the designated time frame. Thus, I decided that I would return to Bali for fieldwork whenever school was not in session. The first fieldwork trip took place in December 2019 for three weeks during FSU's winter break, during which time I took lessons with Sukarata and interviewed other musicians. During the spring semester of 2020, the world was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. I felt unsafe being in the United States, especially as many countries were closing their borders; I was afraid that if I did not return to Bali soon, I would be stuck in Tallahassee, Florida, away from my wife and young son and the rest of my family, indefinitely. Thus, I decided to return to Bali in March 2020 and continue my studies remotely.

Returning home was an advantage and disadvantage at the same time. The primary disadvantage was that I was still a full-time student participating in classes in the middle of the night due to the 12-hour difference between Tallahassee and Bali. However, the advantage of being home in Bali was that I could conduct my fieldwork and collect the data required for this research. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and regulations imposed by the government, I had to be very careful in taking lessons and interviewing my interlocutors. I took the responsibility of calling them to make an appointment to ask if they would feel comfortable speaking in person. They all agreed, and I was certain to maintain health protocols in my meetings. In addition to conducting face-to-face interviews, I also held several interviews over digital platforms such as Zoom and Skype when there was a considerable distance between the informant and me.

Understanding the world of Sukarata's drumming improvisation has required keen attention to the study of his techniques, lengthy conversations, and careful observations of his playing on my part. To fully realize the aims of this research, I felt the need to create high-

quality audio-video recordings that focused on Sukarata's drumming style. This had never been done before. This major recording project was undertaken with funding from the Summer Research Support Award (SRSA) from the Musicology Area, College of Music, FSU, and a research travel grant from the American-Indonesian Cultural Exchange Foundation (AICEF). The professional quality recordings, in addition to earlier footage that I had taken during my lessons, have been transcribed, notated, and analyzed to more deeply understand Sukarata's tripartite drumming concept of *meguru gending*, *kutang-duduk*, and *meguru igel*.

This dissertation analyzes three pieces: *Truna Jaya*, *Jauk Keras*, and *Oleg Tamulilingan*. The examples chosen focus on either performance fragments or complete performances. When played correctly, these pieces represent the epitome of a drummer's skill in Balinese drumming improvisation. These are common selections used in drumming competitions. According to Sukarata, if a drummer can play and identify the specific patterns used in these pieces, then their knowledge can be transferred and applied to other repertoire, even for new compositions. Sukarata's statement is similar to Brinner's reasoning in selecting specific *gending* that he uses for analysis in Javanese gamelan:

[T]his piece contains all you need to know...several assumptions about the nature of competence are implicit: the existence of prototypes, finite domains, and systematic transferability. Among the things to be known, some are more representative than others, the piece in question is such a prototype. Some domains of competence are finite in the sense that a set amount of knowledge, which can be derived from this one piece, is representative of the entire universe and possibilities. Finally, musical performance is systematic enough to enable one to apply the knowledge gained from the prototypical piece to other pieces. (Brinner 1995, 72).

Recording for this dissertation was completed in the summer of 2021. During the recording process, however, several circumstances arose that made me stray from the initial plan. The original idea was to record Tut Nang playing *kendang*, accompanied by students from ISI Denpasar and recorded at the *karawitan* studio at ISI Denpasar, but all of these plans had to be

adjusted. Since approximately 2010, Sukarata has been diagnosed with several illnesses, such as diabetes and lung problems due to his heavy smoking. His health condition significantly declined in June 2021, causing me to question whether this project could continue. After discussing the situation with Tut Nang, we both came to the realization that it was impossible for him to play all of the required excerpts for this project. I was distraught seeing him in such a condition; he could barely sit with a drum on his lap. However, Tut Nang ultimately insisted that the research continue and suggested that a trustworthy student of his choosing could play the *kendang*.



Figure 1.1 I Ketut Sukarata in the 2021 Summer recording

In my initial conversations with Sukarata, we decided that I would recruit the accompanying musicians, which would consist of ISI Denpasar students. He agreed to this idea, but suddenly, a week before the recording, he called me and said the musicians were ready and waiting for me to practice at his house. I was caught by surprise because I did not know who the musicians were – I had not yet chosen anyone. I grabbed my motorcycle and quickly drove to his

house. Luckily, I knew most of the assembled group, which consisted of ISI students and alumni, as well as members of Tut Nang's family. When I saw the musicians, I was relieved, confident that I could work with these individuals in order to record the excerpts needed for the project successfully.

The last amendment to the plan was the place of recording. The recording was intended to take place at the *karawitan* studio at ISI, as agreed upon by the school's officials, the recording team, the accompanying musicians, and Tut Nang. Unfortunately, however, due to an increase of COVID-19 cases in Java and Bali, the President of the Republic of Indonesia announced that strict regulations prohibiting any type of activities in schools and universities would go into effect on July 3, 2021. Because of this restriction, I had to change the recording location at the last minute. I was fortunate to be a member of Sanggar Cendana, a gamelan group sponsored by I Ketut Suanda of Batubulan, Gianyar, Bali, whose studio had a gamelan *gong kebyar* and a performance stage. Suanda was very excited when I told him about this project, knowing that Sukarata would be coming to his house. He considered having Tut Nang in his studio an honor and blessing.

### **Methods of Transcription**

It [music] would seem extremely difficult to analyze in depth unless first reduced to the form of a written score, i.e., a transcription in the case of music from an oral tradition. The essential transience of music requires that its movement through time be fixed in writing as a substantive 'reference text' for the living reality. This is what the ethnomusicologist's attempts at transcription aim to provide, whatever the geographical or ethnic source of his material. (Arom 1991, 94).

For the purposes of this dissertation, I have created a notation system to illustrate how the music works. It should be noted that, in practice, Balinese musicians rarely notate their music or read notes during performance. Nevertheless, for this research, I feel that it is vital to transcribe

the music to provide visual reference for readers, especially when attempting to comprehend Balinese improvisatory drumming performance. According to Jane P. Clendinning, “scores and transcriptions help us find where to listen and what to listen for but cannot capture the level of detail of the music itself.”<sup>17</sup>

In this dissertation, I combine four different notation systems. To identify pitch, I use the existing Balinese notational system called the *Ding-dong*, which derives from traditional Balinese letters called *aksaras*. The tuning in Balinese gamelan is different from the common Western tempered scale. Each ensemble, including the thousands of *gong kebyar* ensembles spread worldwide, utilizes a unique tuning: no two sets of instruments are tuned exactly the same. Therefore, the five symbols in the *Ding-dong* system do not refer to fixed pitches but rather to relative note positions within the scale. The two typical scale orientations are *pelog* and *slendro*, the former used in the *gong kebyar* ensemble.

The gamelan *gong kebyar* owned by I Ketut Suanda and used in my recordings has the following tuning, with the Western pitch equivalents being only rough approximations of the actual frequencies.<sup>18</sup>

Table 1.1 *Gong Kebyar* tuning

| Cypher Notations |   | Balinese Aksara | Read  | Equivalent Western Pitch |
|------------------|---|-----------------|-------|--------------------------|
| 1                | : | ꦺ               | Nding | C#                       |
| 2                | : | ꦴ               | Ndong | D                        |
| 3                | : | ꦲ               | Ndeng | E                        |
| 4                | : | ꦸ               | Ndung | G#                       |
| 5                | : | ꦶ               | Ndang | A                        |

<sup>17</sup> This comment was spoken by Dr. Jane P. Clendinning during my 2021 SEM presentation.

<sup>18</sup> The recording of the *pengipuk* section of the *Oleg Tamulilingan* (as discussed in Chapter 2) took place at Sukarata’s house using his private *gangsa*. Although not quite exact, the tuning of Sukarata’s *gangsa* has a resemblance with Suanda’s *gong kebyar* ensemble.

In my transcriptions, I also use cipher notations. There are two ways to notate *gong kebyar* pitches numerically, 12345 and 12356. The latter reflects the derivation of the five-pitch scale (*saih selisir*) in the *gong kebyar* from an originative seven tone *pelog* system, but since neither pitch 4 nor 7 of that original system have ever been used in this form of gamelan, it has become commonplace to simply identify the pitches as 12345. The 12345 system is the one that I employ in this dissertation, and in every case those pitch numbers will appear side by side with their traditional Balinese *aksara* counterparts.

Additional letters and symbols are also used in the notation, such as a parenthesis ( ) to indicate the *gong* stroke, the dash sign – to indicate the *kemong* strokes, and the plus + to indicate the *kempur* stroke. Rests are written as periods, and brackets [ ] mark a repeating sequence. *Kajar* strokes are not notated because they are played on every beat. There are also several abbreviations used to designate specific musical components being transcribed, such as M (melody), po (*polos*), sa (*sangsih*), *kendang wadon* (KW), and *kendang lanang* (KL).

Table 1.2 Additional notational symbols

| Symbol |   | Meaning                |
|--------|---|------------------------|
| ( )    | : | <i>Gong</i> Stroke     |
| -      | : | <i>Kemong</i> Stroke   |
| +      | : | <i>Kempur</i> Stroke   |
| [ ]    | : | Repeating Sequence     |
| .      | : | rest sign              |
| M      | : | Melody                 |
| po     | : | <i>kotekan polos</i>   |
| sa     | : | <i>kotekan sangsih</i> |
| KW     | : | <i>Kendang wadon</i>   |
| KL     | : | <i>Kendang Lanang</i>  |

The third system of my analysis incorporates the Times Unit Box System (TUBS). This system was created by Philip Harland, who at the time was the assistant director of the UCLA drum ensemble, in 1962 (Koetting 1970, 117). It was used primarily for transcribing the music of membranophones and idiophones for didactic purposes in West African drumming (Shelemay 1997, 157). Moore explains that TUBS “involves drawing a series of boxes in horizontal lines, as many as needed to depict rhythms being played against one another in a given musical example. Each box represents the same small unit of time, most typically an eighth note. Markings within particular boxes indicate that a sound is played on an instrument at that moment, while empty boxes represent rests during which no sound is heard” (Moore 2012, 17).

One limitation of the TUBS system is that it cannot indicate pitches or harmony (see Moore 2012). To resolve that issue, I will use TUBS in two levels. On the top stratum, I insert the pitches of the melodic line along with the symbols of the colotomic structure. Each takes one box, with the value of one quarter note. The pitches are transcribed from the basic melody, present in almost all sections of *gong kebyar* music, called *bantang gending*.<sup>19</sup> The quarter note boxes in the melodic layer will then be divided into sixteenth notes either in a second or third stratum, which shows the drumming rhythms.

This dissertation mainly focuses on *kendang gupekan* (hand drumming) for *gong kebyar* music, which can be played in the style of paired drumming (*kendang mepasangan*) or solo drumming (*kendang tunggal*). In Chapter 2, I analyze the paired drumming style, in which two drummers, playing the *kendang wadon* and *kendang lanang*, respectively, perform simultaneously in interlocking textures. The *kendang wadon* is the larger drum, with a much looser and lower sound than its counterpart, the *lanang*. *Wadon* means female, while *lanang*

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<sup>19</sup> Other scholars use the term *pokok* to refer to the basic underlying melody.

means male in Balinese. The reference is to the philosophical concept of *wadon* being mother earth (*ibu pertiwi*) below, hence the lower sound, and *lanang* being father sky (*bapa akasa*), with correspondingly higher sounds.

Chapter 3 talks about the *kendang tunggal* style played alternately between the *wadon* and the *lanang* drummer. This chapter is focused on a fixed choreography, and the analysis is on the *pengipuk* section of the *Truna Jaya* dance. While the fourth chapter also investigates the *kendang tunggal* style, the dance analyzed, an improvisatory form called the *Jauk Keras*, features only one drummer.

The language of the drum is very rich and varied. Pitch and quality of sound and timbre vary according to the touch of the drummer's fingers or hand: one, two, or more fingers, the whole hand, the muting or striking of the cowhide (de Zoete and Spies 1939, 27). To understand the varieties of these patterns, I add a fourth system in my transcriptions, derived from the onomatopoeia of sounds produced by striking the drums. I use letters to represent the timbres of the drums, which I divide them into two primary categories, called *suara pokok* (major sounds) and *suara maya* (minor sounds) (see also Sudirana 2009, 16). The *suara pokok* are sharp and clear sounds (marked bold in the table below), while the *suara maya* are mostly subtle and soft, used in between the *suara pokok* sounds.

The *suara pokok* for the *wadon* drum consists of the 'D,' 'C,' and 'K,' for the *lanang* the 'T,' 'c,' and 'P' sounds.<sup>20</sup> The rest are all categorized in the *suara maya*. The *wadon's dag* sound is produced when the drummer's right hand hits the rim of the drum and makes a low-heavy

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<sup>20</sup> When playing the Balinese drum, the musician will sit crossed legged on the floor. The drum will be positioned on their lap, with the larger head (*muwe*) on the right side and the smaller head on the left side.

sound.<sup>21</sup> The *kuncung* or *cung* sound has a higher pitch produced by placing the right thumb near the upper edge of the rim, striking the skin with the pinky, and bouncing the middle three fingers off the skin (Sudirana 2009, 16). The third sound is *kap*, the only main sound using the left hand. It is produced by striking the palm on the skin, creating a sharp slapping sound. The five *suara maya* on the *wadon*'s drum are *tep* (t), *de* (d), *ge* (G), *lung* (u), and *peng* (E). *Tep* is produced by gently striking the right hand on the drum skin, and usually precedes the *kap* sound. The *ge* and *lung* use the same technique as the *dag* and *cung* sound, but instead played on the left hand. *Peng* is played by striking the rim using two or three fingers on the left side of the drum.

Table 1.3 Onomatopoeic sounds of the drum

| <i>Kendang Wadon</i>                |                    |                       |                        |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Right Hand                          |                    | Left Hand             |                        |
| <b>D = <i>dag</i> or <i>dit</i></b> | Strong Open Stroke | <b>K = <i>ka</i></b>  | Strong slapping stroke |
| <b>C = <i>cung</i></b>              | High sound         | G = <i>ge</i>         | open stroke            |
| t = <i>tep</i>                      | closed stroke      | u = <i>lung</i>       | High sound             |
| d = <i>de</i>                       | weak open stroke   | E = <i>peng</i>       | rim stroke             |
| <i>Kendang Lanang</i>               |                    |                       |                        |
| Right Hand                          |                    | Left Hand             |                        |
| <b>T = <i>tut</i></b>               | Strong Stroke      | <b>P = <i>pak</i></b> | Strong slapping stroke |
| <b>c = <i>cung</i></b>              | High sound         | u = <i>lung</i>       | High sound             |
| t = <i>tep</i>                      | closed stroke      |                       |                        |
| d = <i>de</i>                       | weak open stroke   |                       |                        |
| U = <i>dug</i>                      | Strong Open Stroke |                       |                        |

For the *lanang* drum, the three *suara pokok* are *tut* (T), *cung* (c), and *pak* (P).<sup>22</sup> The *tut* sound is produced by striking the right head while the left-hand closes and presses the smaller

<sup>21</sup> Balinese drummers commonly refer to the right-hand open stroke *dag* by its alternate name of *cedit*. For the sake of ease of comprehension for non-Balinese readers, I will use the term *dag* consistently throughout this dissertation, though it should be understood that Balinese drummers will just as often refer to this stroke as *cedit* instead.

<sup>22</sup> The sounds D (*dag*) and U (*dug*) will appear in Chapter 2 when I talk about the *kendang batu-batu*. This style of drumming originates from the *lelambatan* genre where the drummers use a *panggul* or mallet to play. The vocable

head. The left hand pressing creates a higher pitch when the right hand strikes. If the smaller head is left open, the resulting sound will be loose, which is unwanted in *gong kebyar* paired drumming. The *cung* sound on the *lanang* uses the same technique as in the *wadon*. Also, the *pak* sound uses the same method as the *kap* sound on the *wadon*. The three *suara maya* on the *lanang* drum are *de* (d), *tep* (t), and *lung* (u), and use the same technique as in the *wadon* drum.

In all of the transcriptions found in this dissertation, there are at least two levels of notation. One shows the pitch and colotomic structure, while the other indicates the drumming patterns. These two elements must always go together, because, as will be discussed at length, Sukarata insists a drummer must understand how their patterns fit in with the melody and colotomic structure, to make the drums ‘sing.’

### Overview of Chapters

The dissertation is divided into five chapters to help readers gain a comprehensive understanding of the improvisatory drumming practices in the Balinese *gong kebyar* genre. The first chapter provides an overview of the project, its purpose and significance, its background, the methodology, a literature review that includes the theoretical framework, and the methods of transcription. In this chapter, I posit I Ketut Sukarata and his works as a case study through which to understand the broader context of drumming in Bali.

The following three chapters provide analyses of Sukarata’s tripartite methods of improvisation. Chapter 2 is titled “*Kutang-Duduk: Collective Improvisations in Balinese Paired Drumming.*” It explores current discourse regarding paired drumming in Balinese gamelan,

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for the *wadon*’s open right stroke is retains the name *dag*, while the *lanang* is usually called *dug*. The vocable *dag* is still used in the *gupekan* style of drumming, while the *lanang*’s *dug* has changed to *tut* in the *gupekan* style.

including a discussion of the lack of attention such drumming styles have received in scholarship to date. The *kutang-duduk* concept emphasizes the drummer's ability to ornament, rearrange, and shift strokes to change peoples' perceptions of the music through the process of *kutang* (to give or leave out strokes) and *duduk* (to replace one stroke with another or to syncopate). By analyzing fragments from the *kendang batu-batu* section of *Truna Jaya* and the *pengipuk* section of *Oleg Tamulilingan*, I highlight how the skilled and creative hands of master drummers such as Sukarata can transform a largely fixed compositional practice into a rich process of collective improvisation.

Chapter 3, titled “*Meguru Gending: A Framework for Solo Drumming*,” focuses on how a *gending* (piece) becomes a guide for the drummer when improvising in a solo drumming context. This method dictates how a drummer chooses and creates drum patterns that fit a specific melody and colotomic structure nicely. It is applicable when playing improvisational sections that accompany dances with a more fixed choreography. As a case study, this chapter analyses the *pengipuk* section of the *Truna Jaya* dance.

Chapter 4 discusses the last concept of Sukarata's improvisational practices, which is *meguru igel*. The title of this chapter is “*Meguru Igel: A Drumming Method for Accompanying Dance*.” Where the preceding chapters focus mainly on drumming accompanying dance repertoires with mostly fixed choreography, this chapter shifts to a focus on the contrasting *meguru igel* process, which is a method for interaction and communication between drummer and dancer when the choreography is not fixed. In other words, *meguru igel* occurs when a drummer plays solo improvisations while simultaneously interpreting and challenging an improvised dance choreography. I use the performance of *Jauk Keras* dance as case studies for analysis.

Finally, in the concluding chapter, I bring the main concepts discussed in each of the prior chapters together for a broader consideration of improvisational practices of drumming in the gamelan *gong kebyar*. Here I reassert the appropriateness of choosing I Ketut Sukarata as the case study for this investigation on the basis of his lifetime of experience as a musician, teacher, and composer, as well as his singular distinction as a venerated master of the Balinese *kendang* art in the context of *gong kebyar* music. I also revisit Sukarata's concepts and look in a holistic way to identify larger findings based on the individual case studies and chapters. In the final portion, I provide a speculative idea of how this particular research project suggests possibilities for interpreting Balinese modes of social life and interaction beyond music itself.

## CHAPTER 2

### ***KUTANG-DUDUK:* COLLECTIVE IMPROVISATION IN BALINESE PAIRED DRUMMING**

This chapter investigates Sukarata's first concept of drumming improvisation, *kutang-duduk*, a method for collective improvisation in paired drumming within *gong kebyar*. *Kutang* means to give, and *duduk* means to take. This approach emphasizes drummers' creativity through the ornamentation, rearrangement, and shifting of strokes by *kutang* ("give," leaving out strokes) and *duduk* ("take," replacing them with other strokes or syncopating). Analysis of concepts like this has been missing in the field of Balinese gamelan studies, especially for *gong kebyar*. Other scholarship has discussed this topic in different musical genres, however, explicitly focusing on the interaction of drumming partners in the *arja* style (see M. M. Hood 2001; Tilley 2019). The drumming in *arja* is very distinct from paired drumming in *gong kebyar* in terms of the drum size, playing technique, and patterns.

As I emphasized in Chapter 1, the historical absence of literature on collective improvisation in gamelan *gong kebyar* music has created a mistaken assumption that it basically does not exist. The only type of simultaneous improvisatory practice mentioned is the *batu-batu* technique in *panggul* (mallet) drumming (see Bakan 1999; Tenzer 2000a). This style was influenced by the older genre of *lelambatan* music, which was then adopted to *gong kebyar* music. Therefore, the present chapter raises a specific question: Does collective improvisation occur in paired hand drumming in the *gong kebyar* ensemble, and, if so, to what extent and with what implications for the overall practice?

Two moments inspired this chapter. The first was my reading of scholarship on *arja* drumming by Made Mantle Hood and Leslie Tilley. Hood and Tilley both investigate how two

drummers improvise at the same time. I especially found relevant the term “collective improvisation” in Tilley’s book, where she defines it as “some or all members of a group participating in simultaneous improvisation of equal or comparable weight” (Tilley 2019, 6).

The second inspiring moment occurred during my interviews with Sukarata. I asked him, “*Pak, yen kendang mepasangan di gong kebyar, wenten improvisasi?*” (Bapak, is there improvisation in paired drumming for *gong kebyar*?).<sup>23</sup> Sukarata replied, “*Ada! Ngudiang sing ada? Konyangan ada permainanane to, harus ada kutang-duduk ne*” (Yes, there is! Why do you think there isn’t? Everything has its practice; it must have a *kutang-duduk*). I was quite surprised; this was the first time I had ever heard a drummer firmly state that there is collective improvisation in *gong kebyar* music.

Sukarata’s concept of *kutang-duduk* describes the implementation of collective improvisation within the paired hand drumming, or *kendang gupekan*, style in the *gong kebyar* genre.<sup>24</sup> This concept rejects the idea of paired drumming as a fixed set of pre-composed patterns without any freedom to improvise. Sukarata recreates patterns and cleverly manipulates sounds for the two standard practices in paired drumming, namely the *kendang nutug* and *kendang batu-batu*. To fully understand this concept, I analyze it through a case study of the *pengipuk* section of the *Oleg Tamulilingan* dance and the *batu-batu* section of the *Truna Jaya* dance.

### **The Misconception of the *Kendang Wadon-Lanang* Relationship**

In *gong kebyar* drumming, the partnership between the *kendang wadon* and *lanang* is critical. Two individual players must act, think, and react as a single organism to direct the

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<sup>23</sup> The word *pak* or *bapak* is used as a title of respect for adult men.

<sup>24</sup> *Kendang gupekan* refers to the style of hand drumming that is commonly used in the *gong kebyar* ensemble. The drum can be played in solo (*kendang tunggal*) or in paired drumming (*kendang mepasangan*) (Sadguna 2010, 14–15).

ensemble. Both drummers must have a similar level of technical skill. The quality of the sounds produced from the drum must have an equal volume; neither drummer can dominate the other. After seventeen years of playing Balinese drums, I have learned to seek a partner who can keep up with my strokes and power. If my partner is more or less powerful, I will struggle to keep the balance and begin to feel burdened while playing, which will impact my concentration on the piece. On the other hand, if I know that my partner is in sync with me, I will play with ease, comfortably and confidently, allowing me greater focus on leading the piece.

Additionally, communication among the drummers is vital to establishing trust. Without faith in each other, the drummers will most likely act skeptical towards one other, acting like strangers. Communication starts before the practice begins. Usually, when musicians arrive at a rehearsal place, they will be served coffee and snacks. They talk with each other during this time and get to know each others' personalities and characters. The drummers will also negotiate patterns and how to play them; this is important because if they do not have the same vision, strokes will occasionally collide (i.e., coincide rather than alternate in interlocking fashion), which is unwanted in a performance. I Ketut Gede Asnawa uses the terms *matuhin bayu* to mean that the two drummers must exhibit equal energy and skills while also having the same musical perception and vision.<sup>25</sup>

Within the *gong kebyar* ensemble, drummers are positioned at the front to have better visual contact with the other musicians so as to provide cues that are visible and audible to all. The *wadon* drummer will sit in front of the *lanang* drummer because the *wadon* player holds a more significant role in the repertoire. The *wadon* player is the primary leader, who gives cues and commands for transitions and dynamic changes, as well as to start and end the piece. The

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<sup>25</sup> Personal interview with I Ketut Gede Asnawa via Zoom, September 20, 2020.

*wadon-lanang* relationship is analogous to a pilot and co-pilot. Due to the more significant responsibility and positionality, the *wadon* drummer has been the subject of more discussion, while the *lanang* player has often been neglected.

One often hears discussions on great *wadon* players, but I have rarely heard any talk about great *lanang* players. Furthermore, during sections that require solo improvisation, the *wadon* player will play while the *lanang* player rests until the section finishes.<sup>26</sup> Another reason the *lanang* player is hardly discussed is because when an ensemble is being taught a new piece, the teacher will always guide (teach) the *wadon* part, but will seldom say or demonstrate what the *lanang* part should be. It is assumed that the *lanang* will know what to do either by following the *wadon*'s lead and imitating the same pattern a sixteenth beat later, which is called *nutug*, or adapting the *batu-batu* style from the *lelambatan* genre and transforming it for paired hand drumming.<sup>27</sup> The *nutug* process is the rudimentary technique that is taught to beginner drummers and eventually becomes an instinct for *lanang* drummers in performance. This *nutug* instinct becomes so strong that it also sometimes becomes a limitation to the drummer if they think that the *lanang* can only mimic the *wadon*. This notion has led players and Balinese scholars to believe that there is limited or no freedom for the *lanang* player to improvise. This is a misconception, which seems to reduce the image of the *lanang* player to a mere complement of the *wadon*.

An exciting story was once told to me by another great drummer, I Wayan Suweca. He was a professor at ISI Denpasar, leader of many groups, and one of Sukarata's drumming

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<sup>26</sup> In drumming performance for the *gong kebyar* ensemble, there are two styles, as noted. One is paired drumming, where both drummers play together, and the other is solo drumming for specific sections where usually only the *wadon* plays. Sukarata actually challenges that idea that only the *wadon* may play the solo section. The discussions in Chapter 3 shows how Sukarata instructs both drummers to perform solo drumming.

<sup>27</sup> In Balinese, the word *nutug* means "to follow." Thus, in drumming, the *lanang* player is following the lead, *wadon* drummer by replicating his patterns slightly later.

partners. Suweca described an amazing experience he had while on tour in Europe. He had the opportunity to partner up with I Wayan Berata, Sukarata's father. Suweca played *wadon* and Berata played *lanang*. In Suweca's words, "at first, I thought playing *lanang* was only to follow the *wadon*'s patterns, but when the maestro I Wayan Berata played the *lanang*, I was in shock. He was a really great musician that provided the comfort for me to play the *wadon* section."<sup>28</sup> Suweca felt very relaxed. He was confident and able to do many variations because Berata strongly maintained and balanced his strokes. Every void of the *wadon* was filled in by Berata, who had many ways of manipulating the sounds of the *lanang* drum. Only then did Suweca realize that the *lanang* had an essential part in making the interlocking between players sound more attractive, exuberant, and decorative, while also controlling the piece's dynamics.

*Lanang* drumming presents unique challenges in comparison with its counterpart. Where the *wadon* player has the primary responsibility of shaping phrases and rhythmic development in the piece overall, the *lanang* drummer is expected to enliven and enrich the composite drum part. The *lanang* player must be *lamis*, literally "talkative," in ways that the *wadon* player is not. This talkativeness calls for a chatty, improvisatory interplay with the more foundational *wadon* – unpredictable syncopated accents, an agile skipping around and in between the main *wadon* notes to give them richer character, the integration of "peripheral" drum strokes, like *cung* strokes, to reinforce or juxtapose the *wadon*'s rhythmic ground and make the rhythm dance. If the *lanang* only follows the *wadon*, the interlocking sounds boring, dull, and amateur. While many *lanang* players do not have the ability to play *lamis*, the best ones, like Sukarata, do, and when that layer is present it enriches the drumming—and the whole gamelan—exponentially.

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<sup>28</sup> Personal interview with I Wayan Suweca, September 19, 2020.

Previously, I had also believed that the *lanang* player was only a ‘backup’ for the *wadon*, but that perception changed when I started studying with Sukarata and he introduced me to the concept of *kutang-duduk*. His *wadon* style was amazing, but his *lanang* style was even more impressive. Sukarata’s ability to sense his partner’s patterns are remarkable. I sometimes even think that he can read my mind and know what I will play. In many of my lessons with him, he would start by giving me a foundational pattern, then follow with several developments (*kekembangan*). He would then play the *lanang* to accompany my patterns. After mastering the patterns he gave me, I intentionally altered those patterns and provided different stroke emphasis. I was in awe of how he could interlock with me even without knowing what type of pattern I was going to play. These sessions always ended with me laughing in amazement at his uncanny drumming, interaction, and anticipation skills. I assume that Sukarata’s concept was influenced by his father, which he then developed more holistically. Berata might have played *lanang* due to experience and instinct, but Sukarata shaped the model and constructed it in the method of *kutang-duduk*.

### ***Kendang Nutug and Kendang Batu-batu***

Before delving into Sukarata’s *kutang-duduk* concept, I will first explain two common drumming styles in paired drumming, called *kendang nutug* and *kendang batu-batu*. As I have mentioned previously, *nutug* means to follow. In this case, it indicates a pattern played by the *wadon* drummer and duplicated by the *lanang* drummer, usually one sixteenth note later. To understand the practice of *nutug*, we must know how the two drums relate in terms of their sounds. The following table will show the types of sounds produced by each drummer.

Table 2.1 The timbral relationship between *kendang wadon-lanang*<sup>29</sup>

| <b><i>Kendang Wadon (KW)</i></b> | <b><i>Kendang Lanang (KL)</i></b> |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Right Hand Stroke</b>         | <b>Right Hand Stroke</b>          |
| <i>Dag</i> (D) →                 | <i>Tut</i> (T)                    |
| <i>Cung</i> (C) →                | <i>Cung</i> (c)                   |
| <i>Tep</i> (t)                   | <i>Tep</i> (t)                    |
|                                  |                                   |
| <b>Left-Hand Stroke</b>          | <b>Left-Hand Stroke</b>           |
| <i>Ka</i> (K) →                  | <i>Pak</i> (P)                    |
| <i>Ge</i> (G)                    | <i>lung</i> (u)                   |

In Table 2.1, the three red arrows indicate distinctive relationships within the *nutug* playing style. The *wadon*'s *dag* (D) will be followed by the *lanang*'s *tut* (T), *cung* (C) followed by *cung* (c), and *ka* (K) followed by *pak* (P). The following table is one of the most common *kendang* phrases that can be seen in many dance repertoires. This transcription is based on the eight-beat *bapang* structure.

Table 2.2 Common *nutug* phrase in *bapang* structure for *kendang gupekan*

| Beat | [ (8)   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4+ | 5 | 6 | 7] |
|------|---|---|---|---|----|---|---|----|
| KW   | . K . K . C . C . K . C . D . C . K . K . D . D . D . D . D . D . |   |   |   |    |   |   |    |
| KL   | . . P . P . c . c . P . c . T . c . P . P . . . T . T T . T . T . |   |   |   |    |   |   |    |

Gong Phrase

The transcription in Table 2.2 shows, in practice, what *nutug* looks like in paired drumming within the *gong kebyar* style. As we can see from the beginning (beat 8), the *kendang wadon*'s (KW) strokes are mimicked by the *kendang lanang* (KL).<sup>30</sup> Cross-referencing Table 2.1 to recall how the sounds are related between the drummers (shown in the red arrows), it is evident that the *lanang* drummer is playing the same pattern as the *wadon* but a sixteenth note later. Towards the end, there is a slight change in this relationship because the drummers are

<sup>29</sup> I have listed the drum strokes that are only used in this chapter. For the complete list of the timbres, refer to Table 1.3.

<sup>30</sup> In Balinese gamelan, the strongest count is on the largest beat number. In the case of the *bapang* structure, it is an eight beat gong cycle, hence the strongest accent is on beat 8. As you can see from the figure above, beat 8 will start the cycle instead of beat 1 if we compare it with Western musical traditions of counting.

playing a “gong phrase” that provides a sense of arrival towards the *gong*. Even then, the patterns played still maintain the feeling that the *lanang* is still *nutug* the *wadon*.

The second style in paired drumming in *gong kebyar* music is called *batu-batu*. This style of drumming originates in the *lelambatan* genre and is also widely used in *beleganjur* music (see Bakan 1999; Tenzer 2000a). It is used for *kendang cedugan* or drumming with mallets, and is commonly performed in *gilak* or *tabuh telu* structures. The word *batu* itself refers to stones or rocks. In performance, a drummer plays his “stones” or “*batu-batu*” by striking the right side of the drum. One drummer improvises while the other keeps the groove. The improvising drummer challenges the established groove by showcasing various unpredictable *batu-batu* that will create an interlocking texture.

In a sixteen-beat *tabuh telu* cycle, the *batu-batu* playing will usually start in the *wadon* part, then either alternate with the *lanang* on the next cycle or stay entirely under the control of the *wadon*. The *lanang*’s groove is usually in a four-beat phrase. After the phrase is played three times, twelve beats total, it will be followed by another four beats of *gong* phrase, for a complete cycle of sixteen beats.

As a drummer, gamelan musician, and lecturer, I often witness drummers that do not listen well to their partners, focusing almost exclusively on their own part. This often creates collisions, or *gedig mepalu*, among the strokes. The most fundamental restriction in this drumming style is always to avoid the *wadon*’s *cedugan* right stroke (notated D) and the left stroke (notated K) with the *lanang*’s groove, which is played by the left hand (notated P). There is an exception to this rule, if either drummer plays the same stroke doubled or tripled, then the strongest accent will lie on the last stroke. Hence, it is still acceptable if the *wadon*’s first stroke aligns with the *lanang*’s stroke, or vice versa.

One of the most common errors is caused by drummers that only play one type of groove. Sukarata states that this is not acceptable, and a skilled *lanang* player must be able to observe, anticipate, and predict what the *wadon* wants to do. The following figure shows the common mistake in *kendang batu-batu*.

Table 2.3 Common mistakes in *batu-batu* drumming

|             |           |           |             |             |                                 |             |           |           |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| B           | (16) -    | 1         | 2           | 3           | 4 -                             | 5           | 6         | 7         |
| KW          | . D D     | D K       | D           | K . K       | . D . .                         | . . . K     | . K . K   | . K . .   |
| KL          | . . P     | . . P     | . . P . P   | . . . P     | . . . P                         | . . P . .   | P . P . . | . . P . . |
| B           | (8) -     | 9         | 10+         | 11          | 12 -                            | 13          | 14+       | 15        |
| KW          | . K . K   | . D       | . K . K . D | D K . D     | . K . K . K . D                 | . D . D     | . D . D   | D . D .   |
| KL          | . . P . . | . . P . . | . P . P . . | . P . . . P | . . . P . P . P . P . U . U . U | . U . U . U | . U . U   | . U . U   |
| Gong Phrase |           |           |             |             |                                 |             |           |           |

This table illustrates that the *kendang lanang* (KL) maintains the groove starting on the *gong* at beat (B) 16. The drummer plays a four-beat groove, which can be seen from beat 16 to 3 marked in yellow. That groove repeats three times until beat 12, followed by a *gong* phrase. While the KL plays the groove, the *kendang wadon* (KW) delivers their improvisatory *batu-batu*. There is no consistent pattern since it is solely based on the *wadon's* improvisatory skill and pre-trained vocabulary.

Both drummers are playing their parts individually rather than thinking as a unit. In three spots, the strokes are *mepalu* or colliding with each other, which is marked in the red circle. On beats 16 and 9, the *wadon's* right stroke (D) is aligned with the *lanang's* left stroke (P), while on beat 1, the *wadon's* left stroke (K) is on the same subdivision as the *lanang's* groove stroke. These three instances are examples of strokes that do not properly interlock between the two drummers. An exception can be found on beat 15, where the *wadon's* D stroke is aligned with the *lanang's* right-hand stroke (U). As I have previously mentioned, if a drummer plays a double stroke, the stronger accent will be on the last strike. Therefore, the *wadon's* second D is

accented, aligned with the *lanang*'s first P, which is considered weaker and not accented. Hence, this is acceptable.

For Sukarata, if the *wadon* plays rhythms like those in the transcription, the *lanang*'s patterns need to be adjusted. To make the *wadon*'s pattern interlock with the *lanang*, Sukarata provides an exemplary way to avoid the collision, as follows:

Table 2.4 Interlocking *batu-batu* drumming

|    |   |   |   |    |   |    |   |    |
|----|---|---|---|----|---|----|---|----|
| B  | (16)  | 1 | 2   | 3  | 4   | 5  | 6   | 7  |
| KW | . D D . D K . D . K . K . D . . . K . K . . . K . K . K . . K . . .                   |   | . K . K . D . . . K . K . . . K . K . K . . K . . .                                     |    | . K . K . . . K . K . . . K . K . K . . K . . .                                     |    | . K . K . K . . K . . . K . K . K . . K . . .                                       |    |
| KL | . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . |   | . P P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . .     |    | . P P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . |    | . P P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . |    |
| B  | (8)   | 9 | 10+   | 11 | 12  | 13 | 14+   | 15 |
| KW | . K . K . D . K . K . D D K . D . K . K . K . D . D . D . D . D .                     |   | . K . K . D D K . D . K . K . K . D . D . D . D . D .                                   |    | . K . K . K . D . D . D . D . D .   |    | . D . D . D . D . D .   |    |
| KL | . P P . P . . . P P . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . |   | . P P . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . |    | . P P . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . . P . . .     |    | . P . P . P . U . U . U . U . U . U . U . U . U . U .                               |    |

Gong Phrase

In Table 2.4, no strokes are colliding. The clashing strokes in Table 2.3 have been fixed in this example because the *lanang* drummer has altered their groove to support the *wadon*'s *batu-batu*. Six green circles are listed to show two strokes are aligned together, but which are not considered *gedig mepalu*. Each stroke has been given the proper *umah* or house as Sukarata says, such that no strokes are fighting against the others. I have specifically highlighted the first two beats in orange, because this pattern will be used and adapted in other repertoires, specifically in the *batu-batu* section of the *Truna Jaya* dance.

### ***Kutang-Duduk: the Art of Collective Improvisation in Gong Kebyar Drumming***

Sukarata's *kutang-duduk* concept, in my observation, was inspired by his father's musicianship, which he mastered and then developed further. The purpose of this concept, according to Sukarata, is as follows: "*Pang sing keto gen, kadene sing ngelah daya!*" (To avoid a monotone pattern, we [drummers] don't want to be accused of lack of creativity). This practice

of *kutang-duduk* only occurs during the paired drumming sections, specifically implemented in the *kendang nutug* and *kendang batu-batu* sections.

*Kutang-duduk* is a form of collective improvisation that is not conducted by an individual, but rather through an effort between two drummers working together to bring the music to life. It provides an interesting opportunity to analyze how musicians think and react within a specific genre. Tilley argues that “creativity is a form of collaborative process where everyone is improvising and collaborating, changing constantly in response to the adjustments their opponents are making” (2019, 4). Collective improvisation demands musicians make spaces in their spontaneous creations for another person’s spontaneous creations to fit, necessarily imperfectly. In other words, collective improvisation is how several people collaborate simultaneously in some sort of partnership that they understand between one another.

Previous assumptions held that improvisation only occurs during the *wadon*’s solo drumming. On the contrary, Sukarata proves that in the highest-level mastery of drumming in *gong kebyar* music, improvisation does happen collaboratively between the two drummers. Sukarata’s extraordinary mastery of collective improvisation is based on decades of experience, understanding of the music’s structure, and reflex and sensibility in watching the partner’s hand movements. “Improvisation depends, in fact, on thinkers having absorbed a broad base of musical knowledge, including myriad conventions that contribute to formulating ideas logically, cogently, and expressively” (Berliner 1994, 492). Of course, improvisatory acts are performed in the moment, but, as Chuck Israels states, “the musical decisions that take place during improvisations are made instantly, but the work behind those decisions takes place over long periods of time—hours, days, weeks, months, and years spent considering all of the musical possibilities” (in Berliner 1994, 494). “*Tolih limane*” (Watch those hands), Sukarata tells me.

“*Aluh sajan, gampang*” (It’s as simple as that, easy), he claims. Of course, Sukarata is oversimplifying the method that he has created; beneath his words lies an essential conceptual framework resulting from dedication and perseverance in developing and perfecting the art of *kutang-duduk*.

The *kutang-duduk* concept illuminates how both drummers become more creative and avoid too-basic realizations of *kendang nutug* and *kendang batu-batu*. To illustrate, I will analyze excerpts from two mainstays of *gong kebyar* pieces in the following section: the *pengipuk* section of the *Oleg Tamulilingan* dance and the *kendang batu-batu* section of the *Truna Jaya* dance. This analysis showcases the processes by which Sukarata develops common drumming patterns into more complex forms using his *kutang-duduk* method.

### **Analysis of the *Kutang-Duduk* Concept in the *Pengipuk* Section of the *Oleg Tamulilingan* Dance**

To understand the concept of paired drumming in the *gong kebyar* ensemble, I analyze a section of the *Oleg Tamulilingan* dance piece, called the *pengipuk*. The *Oleg Tamulilingan* dance was created in 1951, composed by Pan Sukra and choreographed by the legendary dancer Ketut Maria for the first major international tour of Balinese music and dance in 1952 (Tenzer 2006b, 210). This dance depicts the story of two bumblebees flirting with each other in romance. Their flirtation is most evident in the *pengipuk* section, where both dancers try to be intimate with one another.

The *pengipuk* section is played at a medium tempo, around 140 bpm. It follows the *lelongoran* structure, consisting of sixteen beats in one melodic cycle. Structure in Balinese gamelan can be identified through analysis of colotomic structure, the particular cyclical length and sequence of the *gong* tones (Tenzer 1991, 42). It is determined by the length of the cycle (the

number of beats) and the way the colotomic instrument markers are spread out. For a cycle to be named *lelongoran*, it has to contain sixteen beats, with the *gong* striking on beat 16, the *kempur* on beat 4 and 12, and the *kemong* on beat 8.

This section analyzes three videos of paired drumming, all playing the *pengipuk* section of *Oleg Tamulilingan*. Sukarata plays the *lanang* drum, I play the *wadon*, and Juliartha (Sukarata's grandson) plays the *gangs*a (metallophone instrument) that articulates the core melody, called *bantang gending*. This analysis is based on a recording I made on September 20, 2020.

In the first video, I show the most straightforward paired drumming style, where the *lanang* player will more-or-less strictly *nutug* (follow) the same pattern as the *wadon* a sixteenth note later. In the second video, I play the same way as in the first video, but this time Sukarata will introduce improvisatory variations in his part, creating a different kind of character. The third video, which represents the highest level of drumming skills, I, playing the *wadon*, will also introduce various patterns and improvisations, and challenge Sukarata to respond to my variations in the moment.

## **Video #1**

In this first video<sup>31</sup>, the drummers are playing essentially the same patterns, where Sukarata on the kendang *lanang* is playing a sixteenth note later than my strokes. This is the first level of drumming, which is called *nutug* or following. We can see that mimicking process in the transcription below.

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<sup>31</sup> The video can be found here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9HyuUeTD3Y&list=PLMebgOuvntO2Y75CSiVTolIVtNYvbpnYTS&index=1>

Table 2.5 Transcription of Video #1

|    |       | Kemong Phrase |     |     |      |     |     |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|-------|---------------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| M  | ( ) 4 | ^ 5           | 0 4 | ^ 5 | o 1+ | 0 4 | ^ 5 | o 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| KW | t     | K             | t   | K   | .    | C   | .   | C   | . | K | . | C | . | C | . | K | . | C | . | C | . | K | . | K | . | D | . | D | . | D |   |   |
| KL | t     | .             | P   | .   | P    | .   | c   | .   | c | . | P | . | c | . | c | . | P | . | c | . | c | . | P | . | P | . | . | T | . | T | . | T |

|    |      | Gong Phrase |     |     |      |     |     |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|------|-------------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| M  | 0 4- | 2 2         | 3 3 | o 1 | 2 2+ | o 1 | ^ 5 | o 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| KW | .    | K           | .   | K   | .    | K   | .   | D   | . | D | . | D | . | D | . | D | . | D | . | D | . | D | . | D | . | D | . | D | . | D |
| KL | T    | .           | P   | .   | P    | .   | P   | .   | T | . | T | . | . | T | . | T | . | T | . | T | . | T | . | T | . | T | . | T | . | T |

The colotomic structure here is marked by the *gong* {( )} on beat 16, *kempur* {+} on beat 4 and 12, and *kemong* {-} on beat 8.<sup>32</sup> This analysis focuses on beats 16 to 6, where the collective improvisatory practices occur. From beat 6 until 7 is the *kemong* phrase, and from beat 8 until 15 is the *gongan* phrase. I omit analysis of those phrases because they are pre-composed patterns that are used to anticipate and emphasize the upcoming *kemong* and *gong*. We also do not consider the *suara maya* because their function is to balance the hands of the drummer and the sounds are subtle.

From this transcription, it is clear that the *kendang lanang* (KL) player is *nutug* the *kendang wadon* (KW) drummer. He is playing the corresponding strokes (see red arrows in Table 2.1). I have circled the related strokes to emphasize the *nutug* processes. Every K is followed by P, and each C is trailed by c. These phrases occur twelve times, which is a significant number in a short period.

Sukarata made an interesting statement during this recording: “*Belog sajan ngenah!*” (I feel so stupid!). A maestro drummer at the highest level, such as Sukarata, would never play basic patterns like this; thus, he was terribly unexcited, indeed bored. Sukarata mentions that this

<sup>32</sup> As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, the *gong* stroke has the strongest accent among all the other colotomic markings. The *gong* stroke in this section is on beat 16 that is written in the beginning of the piece as marked in parenthesis.

level of interaction usually happens between amateur drummers, merely as a way for them to get through the piece.

## Video #2

In this second video<sup>33</sup>, I have not changed my playing at all, but there is a subtle difference in what Sukarata is doing compared to the first video. It has a similar feel, but nevertheless sounds different. In the transcription below, I illustrate what Sukarata has done.

Table 2.6 Transcription of Video #2

| M  | (U) 4   | ^ 5 | U 4 | ^ 5 | o 1+ | U 4 | ^ 5 | o 1 | Kemong Phrase |  |  |  |  |  |
|----|---|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|---------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| KW | t . K . t . K . C . C . K . C . C . K . C . C . K . K . D . . D . D .                               |     |     |     |      |     |     |     |               |  |  |  |  |  |
| KL | t . P . t . P . t . P . c . u . u . t . P . c . u . u . t . P . c . u . u . t . P . T . T . T . T . |     |     |     |      |     |     |     |               |  |  |  |  |  |

| M  | U 4-  | o 2 | o 3 | o 1 | o 2+ | o 1 | ^ 5 | o 1 | Gong Phrase |  |  |  |  |  |
|----|---|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| KW | . K . K . K . D . D . D . D . D . . D . . . D . D . D . D . D . D . D .     |     |     |     |      |     |     |     |             |  |  |  |  |  |
| KL | T . P . P . P . T . T . . T . T . T . . T . T . T . T . T . T . T . T . T . |     |     |     |      |     |     |     |             |  |  |  |  |  |

Sukarata has slightly changed his patterns and implemented an intermediate level of *kutang-duduk*. It may sound similar because, as we can see in the transcription, his KL patterns are filled with *cung* (c) and *lung* (u) sounds in a denser practice. This creates a much more live auditory experience for listeners than the first example which does not incorporate the *lung* sound. The second change that occurs is that his patterns are not always *nutug* here. The *nutug* movement happens on beat 16, where he responds to my K with a P twice, and it does not occur again until the end of beat 5. It is also *nutug* with the C-c relationship three times throughout the cycle. Six *nutug* phrases (marked by the brown oval circle) occur in the cycle, only half of the twelve *nutug* phrases in the first video. This reduces the feeling of merely following the *wadon*'s patterns.

<sup>33</sup> The video can be seen on the following link  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eyos8d6zeh8&list=PLMebgOuvntO2Y75CSiVTolIVtNYvbpnYTS&index=2>

The third interesting development in his improvisation here was to make the K-P relationship have a four sixteenth note (or one quarter note) difference (marked in the red circle). If previously the K-P phrase were only one sixteenth note apart, in this video, he manipulated the pattern by using the same idea but expanding its separation length. According to Sukarata, the quarter note difference provides a feeling of *nembak* (shooting at each other). If the *nembak* idea of K-P were to take place precisely on the beat each time, it would sound very amateur, but because he was observing closely what I was doing, he creatively placed the K-P phrase in different spots each time it appears. Trained listeners in Balinese drumming could easily hear this phrase, but they would be surprised that it shows up in unexpected places.

The last change is demonstrated on beat 6, marked in the green circle. Instead of waiting for the *kemong* phrase to happen, he anticipated it by adding a *tut* (T). This makes the phrase sound more intense and leaves no open space. During this recording, the more challenges made him more excited because he could improvise and not be a “stupid” drummer, as he exclaimed in the first video.

### **Video #3**

This last recording<sup>34</sup> shows the highest level of paired drumming partnership, featuring an expert level of *kutang-duduk* collective improvisatory practice. In this example, I have played a different pattern, challenging Sukarata to react to my strokes.

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<sup>34</sup> The video can be seen on the following link  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdAf4vkr0Sc&list=PLMebgOuvntO2Y75CSiVTtoIVtNYvbpnYTS&index=3>

Table 2.7 Transcription of Video #3

|    | Kemong Phrase |     |       |       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|----|---------------|-----|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| M  | ( ) 4         | ^ 5 | ^ 5   | ^ 5   | ^ 5 | ^ 5 | ^ 5 | ^ 5 | ^ 5 | ^ 5 | ^ 5 | ^ 5 | ^ 5 |
| KW | t . t         | K   | D . D | D . t | K   | D   | G   | D   | t   | K   | K   | K   | K   |
| KL | c             | P   | P     | P     | P   | c   | t   | P   | c   | u   | c   | P   | P   |

|    | Gong Phrase                       |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |  |  |  |  |
|----|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--|--|--|--|
| M  | ^ 4-                              | ^ 2               | ^ 3               | ^ 1               | ^ 2+              | ^ 1               | ^ 5               | ^ 1               |  |  |  |  |
| KW | . K . K . K . D . D . D           | D . D . D         | D . D . D         | D . D . D         | D . D . D         | D . D . D         | D . D . D         | D . D . D         |  |  |  |  |
| KL | T . P . P . P . T . T . T . T . T | T . T . T . T . T | T . T . T . T . T | T . T . T . T . T | T . T . T . T . T | T . T . T . T . T | T . T . T . T . T | T . T . T . T . T |  |  |  |  |

In the above transcription, we can see that *nutug* phrases only happen five times, less than either of the other two examples. They only occur for the K-P phrase; there is no C-c phrase because I did not emphasize the *cung* (C) sound. Instead, I wanted to raise the *dag* (D) sound that was not present in the previous videos. Towards the *kemong* phrase we see again that Sukarata adds another T sound to anticipate my D, the same as in Video #2. Elsewhere, however, instead of anticipating my D sound with a T, he replaces it with a P, as seen in the red circles. This is an unusual formula, which occurred three times. One last exciting moment in this video occurred on beat 16 (marked in the green circle), where he anticipates my K sound by striking a double P stroke. This transcription shows that he is improvising all around the beat by oscillating between anticipating and following. This is the implementation of *kutang-duduk* at the highest level, where both drummers challenge each other and create interesting moments instantly.

During the recording, an unexpected mistake happened. At around the 14-second mark of the video, my hand unfortunately slipped and tweaked the pattern a bit, making it slightly off-tempo and shaky. Something reassuring took place during this unintentional moment: Sukarata guided me back into the melody as if taking my hand to help me stand up again after falling. This is a perfect illustration of the value of trust and partnership. I must underline that only experienced drummers with mutual trust can recover from mistakes like this and be able to recover in time, remaining in sync with the melody. They do not panic, they are patient and wise,

they understand that their partners are there for them. I previously explained this as *matuhin bayu* or having the same musical perception. Inexperienced drummers may stop, unable to figure out a path to return to the piece.

### **Analysis of the *Kutang-Duduk* Concept in *Kendang Batu-batu* Section of the *Truna Jaya* Dance**

The *Truna Jaya* dance is one of the most challenging pieces in the Balinese *gong kebyar* repertoire. I Gede Manik composed and choreographed the dance in Buleleng (north Bali). It was a revision of an earlier dance named *Kebyar Legong*, created by Pan Wandres. It is considered to be the height of a player's musicianship, especially for drummers, if they can master this piece comprehensively. It showcases the drummer's solo skill in *kendang tunggal* and also challenges their ability to create attractive paired drumming rhythms. This section of the chapter will focus only on the paired drumming section, specifically on the *kendang batu-batu* part. This section's pulse is played at 60 bpm, but the drummers and *gangsa* play double-speed at 120 bpm. Colotomically speaking, this section also lies under the *lelongoran* structure, similar to the *pengipuk* part of the *Oleg Tamulilingan* dance.

Many drummers play this section by taking their *batu-batu* patterns from *lelambatan*, where the drummers use *panggul kendang* (drum mallets), and transferring them directly to paired hand drumming in this piece. According to Sukarata, drummers take it for granted that they can use the same patterns if this type of structure comes up in any piece, but he is critical, insisting that there is a significant difference. In the *lelambatan* genre the drummers use mallets while in the *kendang gupekan* do not. When a drummer does not use the mallets, they have more options to produce sounds and become more flexible and faster. Therefore, the patterns must be adjusted in accordance with the colotomic structure, the melody, and the character of the piece.



Figure 2.1 Sukarata briefing the drummers for recording

The following analysis will reveal three different aspects of *kutang-duduk*. First will be common patterns and mistakes, second will be the development of the *lanang* part as the *wadon* drummer maintains its patterns, and third will be a creative improvisational interaction between the two drummers. The videos on Example #2 and #3 are played by I Made Dwi Andika Putra on the *wadon* drum and I Nyoman Adi Swarna on the *lanang* drum by, with accompanying musicians chosen by Sukarata. The recording was created on July 5, 2021, under Sukarata's direction.

### Example #1

The table below shows a common pattern used in the *batu-batu* section of the *Truna Jaya* dance. The *kendang lanang* (KL) player adopts the groove from the *batu-batu* in the *lelambatan* style. Since the groove is only played in the left hand of the *lanang* drummer, transferring it to this piece is very simple. The phrase is highlighted in the yellow boxes. It will be played three times before arriving at the *kemong* stroke and another two times before the *gong* stroke.

Table 2.8 Common *batu-batu* pattern in *Truna Jaya*

|    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |  |
|----|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--|
| M  | ( ) 4   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |  |
| KW | C . t K |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |  |
| KL | t . P . |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |  |
| M  | ^ 5     | o 4     | 7 3     | ^ 5     | o 2     | o 1     | ^ 5     | o 2 +   |  |
| KW | t K K d | t K . D | . K t K | . D D . | D K . D | . D . K | . C . C | . . t K |  |
| KL | t P . t | P . P . | t . P . | t . P . | t P . t | P . P . | t . P . | t . P . |  |
| M  | ^ 5     | o 1     | o 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | 7 3     | o 2     | o 1 -   |  |
| KW | t K K d | t K . D | . D t K | . D . D | . . D . | . . t K | . C . C | . . t K |  |
| KL | t P . t | P . P . | t . P . | P . T . | T . . . | T . . . | P . c . | c . P . |  |
| M  | o 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | o 4     | ^ 5     | o 2     | o 1     | ^ 5 +   |  |
| KW | t K K d | t K . D | . K t K | . D D . | D K . D | . D . K | . D . K | . D . D |  |
| KL | t P . t | P . P . | t . P . | t . P . | t P . t | P . P . | t . P . | P . T . |  |
| M  | 7 3     | o 4     | ^ 5     | 7 3     | o 4     | o 1     | ^ 5     | ( ) 4   |  |
| KW | . . D . | . . t K | . C . C | . K . C | . K . C | . K . C | . D . . |         |  |
| KL | T . . . | T . . . | P . c . | c . P . | c . P . | c . P . | c . T . |         |  |

The problem within this drumming sample is that it does not interlock properly in four instances, shown in the red circles. All of the strong accents of the *kendang wadon* (KW) strokes are aligned with the *lanang*'s left-hand groove, which results in *gedig mepalu* or colliding strokes. The strokes within the green circles, plus all the strokes that are aligned with the *suara maya* or minor sounds (notated as 'd' and 't'), are still acceptable. Problems arise because the *wadon* drummer adopts some of the *lelambatan* style *batu-batu* (highlighted in the orange boxes). The *Truna Jaya* dance uses hand drumming only, so the drummer transfers the *batu-batu* mallet patterns using the *dag* sound (D). Since there are collisions between the two phrases, this does not result in *rasa enak* (the "delicious feeling," in this case rhythmic satisfaction).

Another notable element is in the last line, which features a *nutug* relationship between KW and KL. It is clear that the *lanang* drummer is playing the same pattern as the *wadon* drummer. Technically, it is acceptable, but Sukarata says this drumming "*Sing ngelah permainan!*" (Has no game or creativity!). His comment criticizes the *lanang* drummer as a mere follower without the courage to show any creativity.

## Example #2

To provide a better interlocking and using the same *kendang wadon* pattern as in Example #1, the *lanang* drummer must alter their part. We will see that realized in the following example.<sup>35</sup>

Table 2.9 *Batu-batu* with altered *lanang* patterns

|    |           |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |  |  |  |  |
|----|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--|--|--|--|
| M  | ( ) 4     |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |  |  |  |  |
| KW | C . t K   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |  |  |  |  |
| KL | t P P d   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |  |  |  |  |
| M  | ^ 5       | 0 4     | 7 3     | ^ 5     | 2 2     | o 1     | ^ 5     | 2 2+    |  |  |  |  |
| KW | t (K) K d | t K . D | . K t K | . D D . | D K . D | . D . K | . C . C | . . t K |  |  |  |  |
| KL | t (P) . t | P . P d | c u u t | P d t P | d t P d | c . e . | P . c u | c t P . |  |  |  |  |
| M  | ^ 5       | o 1     | 0 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | 7 3     | 2 2     | o 1 -   |  |  |  |  |
| KW | t (K) K d | t K . D | . D t K | . D . D | . . D . | . . t K | . C . C | . . t K |  |  |  |  |
| KL | t (P) . t | P . P d | c u u t | P . T . | T . . . | T . e . | P . c . | c t P . |  |  |  |  |
| M  | 0 4       | ^ 5     | o 1     | 0 4     | ^ 5     | 2 2     | o 1     | ^ 5+    |  |  |  |  |
| KW | t (K) K d | t K . D | . K t K | . D D . | D K . D | . D . K | . D . K | . D . D |  |  |  |  |
| KL | t (P) . t | P . P d | c u u t | P d t P | d t P d | c . e . | P . c u | c . T . |  |  |  |  |
| M  | 7 3       | 0 4     | ^ 5     | 7 3     | 0 4     | o 1     | ^ 5     | ( ) 4   |  |  |  |  |
| KW | . . D .   | . . t K | . C . C | . K . C | . K . C | K C . K | . D . . |         |  |  |  |  |
| KL | T . . .   | T . c . | P . c . | c e e . | c c c . | c . c . | P . T . |         |  |  |  |  |

The KW maintains the same *batu-batu* pattern as in the first example in the above table. The change occurs on the *lanang's* part. We can see that there are no major strokes colliding with each other, besides acceptable ones in the green circles. The KL has changed its groove. It does not maintain the monotonous pattern that we saw in the previous table. Sukarata emphasizes that in the *kutang-duduk* patterns; the *lanang* drummer must be 'talkative' and creative in manipulating sounds. We can see a new sound appearing in this transcription, the *lung* sound (notated 'u' and highlighted in green above). To produce this timbre requires a highly advanced technique because it is played by the left hand (usually the weaker hand for Balinese drummers). It takes years to master the proper sound. It provides the sense that the drummer is *lincah* or agile.

<sup>35</sup> The video can be found on the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3GrYqpTBTw>

The next feature to emphasize is the patterns highlighted in orange. These are a direct adaptation from Sukarata’s earlier *batu-batu* style in the *lelambatan* genre (see example in Table 2.4). In this case he considers the interlocking between the two drummers *enak* and safely transferable to *Truna Jaya*. Hence this pattern reappears in this section of the piece.

The last element I want to point out is in the last line, where previously the *lanang* is only *nutug* or mimicking the *wadon*’s pattern a sixteenth beat later. In this example, the *lanang* drummer starts by *nutug*, but after one beat, the drummer provides a triple *cung* sound, which highlights the *wadon*’s *cung*, making it more recognizable. Heard as one composite line, it will sound as [cccC cCcK PDT.]. There is a rise of intensity of the *cung* sound from both drummers, strengthening the [K PDT.] motive to emphasize and anticipate the upcoming *gong* stroke.

### Example #3

This last video<sup>36</sup> has both drummers improvising at the same time. There are many remarkable features to be found in this transcription.

Table 2.10 Collective improvisation in *kendang batu-batu*

|    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |  |
|----|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--|
| M  | ( ) 4   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |  |
| KW | C . t K |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |  |
| KL | t P P d |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |  |
| M  | ^ 5     | ∪ 4     | ∩ 3     | ^ 5     | ∩ 2     | ∪ 1     | ^ 5     | ∩ 2+    |  |
| KW | . D D D | t K . D | K D t K | D K . D | K D t K | . D . K | . C . C | . . t K |  |
| KL | t P . t | P . P d | c u u t | P d t P | d t P d | c . c . | P d c u | . c . t |  |
| M  | ^ 5     | ∪ 1     | ∪ 4     | ^ 5     | ∪ 1     | ∩ 3     | ∩ 2     | ∪ 1-    |  |
| KW | t K K K | t K K t | K d t K | . D . D | . . D . | . . t K | . C . C | . . t K |  |
| KL | P P t P | P t P P | t P P t | P . T . | T . . . | T . c . | P d c u | . c . t |  |
| M  | ∪ 4     | ^ 5     | ∪ 1     | ∪ 4     | ^ 5     | ∩ 2     | ∪ 1     | ^ 5 +   |  |
| KW | t K K K | t K K t | K d t K | . C . K | K t K d | t K K t | K d t K | . D . D |  |
| KL | P P t P | P t P P | t P P t | P . c . | P P t P | P t P P | t P P t | P . T . |  |
| M  | ∩ 3     | ∪ 4     | ^ 5     | ∩ 3     | ∪ 4     | ∪ 1     | ^ 5     | ( ) 4   |  |
| KW | . . D . | . . t K | . C . C | . K . C | . K . C | K C . K | . D . . |         |  |
| KL | T . . . | T . c . | P . c . | c e e . | c e e . | c . e . | P . T . |         |  |

<sup>36</sup> The video can be found on the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvnHmm5QAWA>

The *wadon* drummer (KW) plays a totally different pattern than in the previous two examples. As the *wadon* plays their patterns, the *lanang* drummer (KL) must be vigilant and anticipate what the *wadon* drummer is about to do. The *wadon* emphasizes his *dag* (D) strokes in the second line, starting the first beat with a triple *dag*. In general KW plays more *dag* compared to the previous two examples.

A unique event happens on beat four, circled in green. It appears that two main strokes are colliding with each other. According to Sukarata, this is an exceptional case; he wants to have us look at the larger picture and see what the previous and following strokes are, and what phrase they are trying to make if combined. As a composite, the combination between the two drummers starting on the second beat of line two, phrase becomes [PKPD KDuK DK.D KPDK]. To accompany the *wadon*'s pattern, the *lanang* will still play its groove but on the fourth beat where the two strokes collide, the *lanang* drummer should decrease the volume of the groove to highlight the *wadon*'s *dag* sound. Therefore, it is still acceptable, but only in this unique case.

A second feature appears on the last beat of the second and third lines (marked in red). This is a place where I find Sukarata's creativity to be especially remarkable. In my decades as a professional drummer, I have never witnessed a drummer shifting the *lanang* part into a sort of delay. Usually, a *lanang* drummer will follow the *wadon* as *nutug*. Hence, if played by both players, the pattern in the second line would ordinarily sound [PCcC c.tK]. Sukarata delays the *lanang*'s *cung* sound a sixteenth note later, so the pattern becomes [PCcC .ctK]. This creates the effect of the *lanang* sound *megantung* or hanging, which is very unusual for a drummer. I was in awe the first time he showed me. It took me a while to even understand how he did it, because as a Balinese drummer, my instincts are strongly trained to follow the *wadon*. Sukarata helped me reconstruct my thoughts on that. After I was able to play this pattern, I transferred this

knowledge to the drummers in the video. Although they were also highly trained drummers, they had difficulty getting the correct *mat* or rhythmic positioning within the beat to play this pattern. I must also acknowledge that most Balinese musicians and drummers are especially adept at playing in duple meters, so if something is thrown to the players out of the ordinary, it is challenging to go against their instincts as in this case. This one modification that seems so simple is actually a great challenge to execute. Nonetheless, after mastering this, a drummer can make the interlocking sound so much more interesting and sophisticated.

The last feature I want to point out is on the third and fourth lines (marked in yellow). If in the second line Sukarata highlights the *dag* sound of the *wadon*, on the following lines, he instead emphasizes the left strokes from both drummers. All of the left strokes are very tight or *kerep*, creating the effect of what Sukarata calls *saling nembak cara bedil* (shooting at each other like guns). Combined, both parts will produce the phrase [PPKK PKKP KPPK], giving a very powerful left-hand stroke effect due to its density. Each drummer must have great reflexes and strong left-hand skills to perform this sequence. This phrase is not easy to perform, as it demands a lot of energy and agility of the hand.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

Scholarship on Balinese gamelan is abundant, yet discourses on improvisational practices in drumming are still scarce. To this day, both local and foreign scholars assume that paired drumming in *gong kebyar* consists of sets of pre-composed patterns with no room for improvisation, especially in the styles of *kendang nutug* and *kendang batu-batu*. In this chapter, I

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<sup>37</sup> The following link shows the *kendang batu-batu* of the *Truna Jaya* piece with the dancer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCWpQDMQIh8> In this recording, both drummers play spontaneous patterns that they have chosen and/or altered from the videos that have been previously analyzed.

have shown how the idea of collective improvisation, as Tilly articulates it, is used in paired drumming in the *gong kebyar* ensemble.

Although *kutang-duduk* means to give and take, it does not have the same meaning as in playing cards, where one discards a card and collects a replacement. It is a collective improvisation between two skilled drummers at the expert level, where each drummer observes, listens, and watches their partners' patterns while also testing their own skills. All of the negotiations among drummers happen at the time of performance. This can only occur when both drummers master the requisite technique, understand the structure, trust each other, and find instant creativity as an accumulation of experience and years of training. Trust plays an important role in paired drumming. As Bakan mentions, "...there is an integral connection between the experience of Balinese drumming and the experience of trust between partners with a willingness to become more than they were alone through each other" (Bakan 1999, 330). One cannot play well without the support of the other.

Paired drumming is also a reflection of life. The *wadon*, as the leader of the ensemble, has a greater responsibility to control how the piece is performed, and hence uses more steady patterns. The *lanang*, by comparison, is more *lamis* or talkative, jumping and moving around the *wadon's* pattern and making the appearance more ornate. To create harmony, there must be a give and take (*kutang-duduk*) in any relationship. Recall the last video of the *Oleg Tamulilingan* dance, where I made a mistake. It shows us that there is room for error, but what is important is how you and your partner react and recover. It tells us that however we try to plan something, sometimes an incident or mistake happens in the middle of the journey. What is more valuable is that you know your partner will hold you up and have your back. You will recover together. This is the philosophy of Balinese paired drumming.

## CHAPTER 3

### *MEGURU GENDING: A FRAMEWORK FOR SOLO DRUMMING*

This chapter investigates Sukarata's second concept in Balinese improvisatory solo drumming practices: *meguru gending*. In the first chapter, I introduced *meguru gending* as a concept in which the melody and colotomic structures (*gending*) become the guidance (*guru*) or framework within which drummers improvise. The concept applies to dances that have fixed choreography. Several scholars have examined this solo drumming style, but none have really identified the important parts to look out for and how to play them (see Tenzer 2000a; Sudirana 2009; 2018; Pryatna 2020).

Each drummer develops their unique style of *kendang tunggal* or solo drumming. Performance usually combines the prepared stock patterns with the ability to recreate, rearrange, alter, and adjust those patterns in the moment.<sup>38</sup> I was always fascinated with Sukarata's playing style. My curiosity first arose when I witnessed Sukarata playing *kendang tunggal* or solo drumming. How is it that his vocabulary of patterns is so rich, yet I can still hear several distinct points that align beautifully with the piece? As a *seniman alam*—a “natural artist,” that is, not a formally trained musician--Sukarata did not have at his disposal the technical language of Balinese music-theoretical discourse—let alone the ability to read and notate music like my colleagues and students at the conservatory.<sup>39</sup> His music-theoretical *knowledge of kebyar*

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<sup>38</sup> Stock phrases are defined as standard idiomatic *kendang* patterns and short forms that can be employed in many different compositions (Bakan 1999, 287)

<sup>39</sup> The term *seniman alam* comes from the word *seniman*, meaning artist, and *alam*, which means nature, or natural. In this context, the term *seniman alam* refers to a person who is highly skilled in a field of artistry, but who has not gained this skill through academic education—in other words, a natural artist (see also Bakan 1993, 436–37; Mashino 2009, 132; E. A. Clendinning 2013, 231)

drumming arguably exceeds that of any other living Balinese drummer, but that does not translate into a discursive or notational practice.

One might view Sukarata in terms of Antonio Gramsci's idea of the "organic intellectual," an everyman's intellectual of the highest order (yet without a formal education) involved in organizing and educating the public (in Gunderson 2018, 4). His mastery of the art of Balinese *kendang* is profound and renowned, yet when called upon to reveal it he tends not to speak in abstract theoretical terms, but rather in the form of stories, like the following one recalling a pivotal event in his musical development from his childhood.

Sukarata was raised by his grandfather, I Made Regog, a famous musician, composer, and gamelan maker. While Regog usually made the bronze instruments, Sukarata was entrusted to take care of the drums. Sukarata remembered sitting at the porch of his *bale* playing the drum one morning.<sup>40</sup> Suddenly, Regog came out and asked him, "*Ngudiang cai tut?*" (What are you doing, Ketut [Sukarata]?). Without much thought, Sukarata replied, "*Ngalih peluh gen kak*" (I'm just exercising, looking for sweat, grandpa). Then Regog said something that Sukarata would never forget: "*Yen kel ngalih peluh, luwungan melaib di alun-alun. Yen kel mekendang, apa kel jujuh? Pang megending je gedige. Apa ye kel ngalih gong, kempur, kemong, jegogan, pang seken gedige.*" (If you are only exercising to get sweat, it's better to go to the *alun-alun* [field]. If you are going to play the drum, what are your patterns emphasizing? It must sing. Whether your patterns are looking for *gong*, *kempur*, *kemong*, or *jegogan*, they must be rhythmically precise). I have heard this story numerous times.

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<sup>40</sup> *Bale* is the generic term used for the main sections of a traditional house in Bali. In the standard design of a Balinese house, the different *bales* are identified by their directional location within the home's overall architecture, such as *bale daja* (north), *bale dangin* (east), *bale delod* (south), and *bale dauh* (west).

That short discussion between Regog and Sukarata would ultimately form the basis of his drumming philosophy, and in turn his drumming practice. He always says to his students, “What are you looking for?” It is in finding the answer to that question over and over again that he finds the core of his drumming artistry. He recognizes the melodic and colotomic structures, even if not through the conventional formal academic ways. His teachings are evidence of that. In all my studies with many drumming teachers, Sukarata was the first person to be very clear about playing *kendang tunggal* based on specific musical elements of the piece. To better understand this concept, I analyze the *pengipuk* section of the *Truna Jaya* dance as a case study.

### **The Musical Structure of the *Pengipuk* Section**

*Truna Jaya* is a *tari tunggal* or solo dance in the *bebancihan* category. Androgynous or middle-gender character types, called *bebancihan*, are common in twentieth century *kebyar* dance pieces, and allow individual women dancers to express more power and strength on stage than they can in daily life (Downing 2010, 59). Gendered aesthetics in Balinese performing arts are not strictly binary, but are related to the portrayal of a wide set of characters, from coarse male masked dances to subtle and complex middle genders to refined female dances (see Bandem and deBoer 1995). The *Truna Jaya* dance depicts a very strong teenager – literally, the “victorious youth” (see Bakan 2019). The tempo is mostly fast and the playing loud, with exuberant *kebyar* (explosion) accents.

In Chapter 2, I talked at length about the improvisatory practices in paired drumming of the *kendang batu-batu* through Sukarata’s *kutang-duduk* approach. In this chapter, I specifically analyze the *pengipuk* section of the *Truna Jaya* dance. The dance itself has two types of

drumming, paired and solo, depending on the structure of the sections. In the *pengipuk* part, solo drumming is used.

Traditionally, the *kendang tunggal* style in *gong kebyar* music is solely played by the *wadon* drummer, while the *lanang* waits to rejoin in paired drumming sections. Sukarata had a different perspective on this. He wanted to showcase both drummers. He said to me, “*Pang ajak dua megupek nunggal, pang sing belog kaden’e juru lanange*” (Both drummers should take turns play the solo drumming style, we don’t want to get the assumption that the *lanang* drummer is incompetent in this style). I followed up my question and asked him, “*Dados cara kenten pak?*” (Can you do that, Bapak?). He cringed and smiled at me and said, “*Nyen sing ngemang?*” (Is there anyone forbidding it?).

The earliest I recall Sukarata starting this trend was in 2003. He was a music consultant (*pembina*) for the *gong kebyar* group representing the city of Denpasar for the Bali Arts Festival (*Pesta Kesenian Bali*) and was entrusted with directing the *Kebyar Legong* dance, the predecessor to the *Truna Jaya* dance. In that event, he told both drummers to take turns playing the *kendang tunggal*, specifically in the *pengipuk* part, because he knew both of them were capable. In the same year, his village group, Banjar Belaluan Sad Merta, also performed at the Bali Arts Festival. One of the pieces was *Kebyar Duduk*, which also has a *pengipuk* section. Sukarata played the *wadon* and was also directing the group with his father, I Wayan Berata. I asked him whether he consulted Berata on the matter of splitting up the drum part, since Berata is considered to have been one of the greatest Balinese musicians of all time (not to mention his own father). According to Sukarata, his father said, “*Ada gen gae Pan Ari. Luwung to.*” (There’s

always something unique that you created, Pan Ari. It sounds nice).<sup>41</sup> Those words he accepted as a blessing from his father, and therefore he decided to continue this style of drumming.

In any type of Balinese drumming, one of the most critical skills a drummer must possess besides technical virtuosity is the ability to identify the musical structure. Structure directly impacts how the drummer will arrange their patterns to fit with the piece. The *pengipuk* section derives its name from the dance, called *igel ngipuk*. Sudirana mentions that the “*pengipuk* meter is derived from the gamelan *gandrung*, a bamboo gamelan used to accompany the *gandrung* dance (a social dance that has a flirtatious character). It is used in *kebyar* dance pieces such as in *Kebyar Duduk*, *Oleg Tamulilingan*, and *Teruna Jaya*. *Pengipuk* has a longer repeated *gong* cycle than *bapang*” (Sudirana 2009, 19–20). Many other dances have this section as well (as mentioned by Sudirana), and the colotomic structure can differ from one dance to another. Hence, the *pengipuk* part of *Truna Jaya* will be unique to this dance in terms of colotomic structure, melody, and ornamentation.<sup>42</sup>

The *pengipuk* section of the *Truna Jaya* dance consists of forty-eight beats in one *gong* cycle. It is played at around 160 bpm, with the *gangsas* playing the *oncang-oncangan kotekan* style. The structure is divided based on several colotomic markings played by four instruments, the *kajar*, *gong*, *kempur*, and *kemong*.

Table 3.1 The melodic and colotomic scheme of the *pengipuk* section of *Truna Jaya*

|    |     |   |   |   |    |   |    |     |
|----|-----|---|---|---|----|---|----|-----|
| 1. | [ 2 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 5  | 4 | 5  | 1+  |
| 2. | 2   | 1 | 5 | 1 | 5  | 4 | 5  | 1-  |
| 3. | 2   | 1 | 5 | 1 | 4  | 2 | 3  | +   |
| 4. | 5   | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3  | 2 | 3  | -   |
| 5. | 5   | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3  | 2 | 3  | +   |
| 6. | 2   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 4+ | 3 | 2+ | (1) |

<sup>41</sup> I Wayan Berata called Sukarata by the name of Pan Ari, meaning *Bapan Duniari* the father of Duniari, which is Sukarata’s daughter.

<sup>42</sup> Some musicians also refer to *pengipuk* as *pengecet*.

Each line consists of eight beats, with the *gong* stroke having the strongest accent on beat 48 (marked in parentheses). The *kajar* is played on every beat, the *kempur* is played five times on beats 8, 24, 40, 45, and 47 (marked as +), while the *kemong* is played twice on beats 16 and 32 (marked as -). Although the *kempur* and *kemong* are played multiple times in one *gong* cycle, not all of their strokes have the same importance in the *meguru gending* concept. Only the strokes that provide dynamic changes are important for the drummer, such as the *kempur* on the eighth beat and the *kemong* on the thirty-second beat. The first *kempur* is a dynamic pivot point from loud to soft, while the second *kemong* does the opposite, indicating a transition from soft to loud. To better understand how this concept works, I will discuss it in greater depth in the following section.

### **Implementation of the *Meguru Gending* Concept**

In this section, my analysis focuses on the implementation of the *meguru gending* concept in the *pengipuk* section of the *Truna Jaya* dance. As mentioned previously, one of the key requisites of the *meguru gending* concept is understanding the colotomic structure. After understanding where the structural instruments sound within the overall cycle, the next step is to break it down and analyze what patterns to use. Sukarata always emphasizes this phrase to me: “*Apa kel alih gedige? Kel nyujuh apa?*” (What are your patterns looking for? What colotomic marker are they trying to underline?). In Balinese music, and similarly in Javanese gamelan (see Becker 1979; Sumarsam 1995), the instruments are divided into different levels of hierarchy. This analysis focuses on various patterns used to approach and emphasize certain colotomic markers, namely the *gong*, *kemong*, or *kempur*.

The transcriptions here are based on a recording that I created in the Summer of 2021. The two drummers are I Made Dwi Andika Putra on the *wadon* and I Nyoman Adi Suwarna playing the *lanang*. Both are long-time students of Sukarata. During the recording, Sukarata was also present, directing the process until he considered the results sufficient in representing his style. To the data from the recording, I have also added interpretation based on my own experience of studying with Sukarata for more than seventeen years.

### **Gong Phrases**

In the Balinese gamelan hierarchy, the greatest power among the instruments is the *gong*. Therefore, Sukarata treats rhythmic phrases approaching *gong* as special, and he has the tendency to add more greater sophistication to these phrases. Several years ago, I asked him for his advice on this, as I had been named a judge for a junior high school drumming competition. The required excerpt was the *pengipuk* from *Kebyar Duduk*, which had a similar construction as the *pengipuk* of *Truna Jaya*. What should I pay attention to in their playing? Sukarata said to me, “One of the most important phrases to watch out for is the *gong* phrase. You have to be on the lookout for how many different phrases they can perform. Each *gong* should have a different phrase.” This has a clear logic to it because when approaching the *gong*, the drummer plays louder, making their patterns more noticeable. Besides that, *gong* phrases must be clear, as they will underline the power of the *gong* stroke.

The patterns used for *gong* phrases are rarely used in the other phrases. They are treated as special, and should only appear for that purpose. The *gong* phrase starts on the *kemong* and continues sixteen beats, stopping one beat before the *gong*. The following transcription shows the position of the *gong* phrase in *Truna Jaya*.

Table 3.2 Location of the *gong* phrase in the *pengipuk* section of the *Truna Jaya* dance

|    |       |     |     |     |       |     |       |         |
|----|-------|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-------|---------|
| 1. | [ 2 2 | o 1 | ^ 5 | o 1 | ^ 5   | o 4 | ^ 5   | o 1 +   |
| 2. | 2 2   | o 1 | ^ 5 | o 1 | ^ 5   | o 4 | ^ 5   | o 1 -   |
| 3. | 2 2   | o 1 | ^ 5 | o 1 | o 4   | 2 2 | 2 3   | o +     |
| 4. | ^ 5   | o 4 | 2 3 | o 4 | 2 3   | 2 2 | 2 3   | o -     |
| 5. | ^ 5   | o 4 | 2 3 | o 4 | 2 3   | 2 2 | 2 3   | o +     |
| 6. | 2 2   | 2 3 | o 4 | ^ 5 | o 4 + | 2 3 | 2 2 + | (o) 1 ] |

Table 3.2 shows the length of the *gong* phrase. One of the characteristics of this phrase is that the drummer will give an audible cue before the *kemong* stroke (notated as -), then, on line four's last beat, will play louder in all of the highlighted sections. In total, the *gong* phrase will last sixteen beats, and therefore the drummer produces a pattern that will have a sixteen beat 'feel,' making it longer than the other phrases.

Drumming patterns for this phrase are much more complex than patterns for other phrases. In a *Truna Jaya* performance, there usually will be three to five *gongs* before this section ends. Sukarata always tells me to use a different *pola* (pattern) for each *gong* cycle. The following are four transcriptions of patterns Sukarata frequently uses and that I have learned, which many younger drummers try to imitate in their playing.<sup>43</sup>

Table 3.3 First *wadon* drummer *gong* phrase

|       |   |          |   |     |   |          |   |       |   |          |   |          |   |       |        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------|---|----------|---|-----|---|----------|---|-------|---|----------|---|----------|---|-------|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| o 4 - |   |          |   |     |   |          |   |       |   |          |   | Motive A |   |       | Motive |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| .     | . | t        | P |     |   |          |   |       |   |          |   |          |   |       |        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| ^ 5   |   | o 4      |   | 2 3 |   | o 4      |   | 2 3   |   | 2 2      |   | 2 3      |   | o 4 + |        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| t     | P | P        | P | t   | P | .        | D | t     | P | t        | P | P        | t | P     | .      | D | . | t | P | t | P | t | P | P | C | u | D | . | P | t | P |
| 2 2   |   | 2 3      |   | o 4 |   | ^ 5      |   | o 4 + |   | 2 3      |   | 2 2 +    |   | (o) 1 |        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| P     | C | u        | D | .   | P | t        | P | P     | C | u        | D | .        | P | P     | C      | u | D | . | P | P | C | u | D | . | D | . | D |   |   |   |   |
| A     |   | Motive A |   |     |   | Motive B |   |       |   | Motive B |   |          |   |       |        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

The boxes highlighted in blue indicate what Sukarata calls *gedig ngangkat gending* (strikes to lift or intensify the piece). It is important that after the *kemong* stroke, the drummer give a lift to the piece by playing louder and pushing the tempo slightly faster. It is very subtle.

<sup>43</sup> All four examples of the *gong* phrase motives can be seen at the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIdVTovOVaE>







to loud. In the following example, I provide four different *kemong* phrases that Sukarata uses in his playing.

Table 3.7 Four variations for the *kemong* phrase

|   |     |     |     |     |         |       |         |                |       |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|-------|---------|----------------|-------|
| 1 | ^ 5 | 0 4 | ? 3 | 0 4 | ?       | 3     | 2       | ? 3            | 0 4 - |
|   |     |     |     | C u | .       | D . C | u t P d | t <b>P</b> . . |       |
| 2 | ^ 5 | 0 4 | ? 3 | 0 4 | ?       | 3     | 2       | ? 3            | 0 4 - |
|   |     |     |     | D G | .       | D . G | D t P d | t <b>P</b> . . |       |
| 3 | ^ 5 | 0 4 | ? 3 | 0 4 | ?       | 3     | 2       | ? 3            | 0 4 - |
|   |     |     |     |     | D G D . |       | t P P d | t <b>P</b> . . |       |
| 4 | ^ 5 | 0 4 | ? 3 | 0 4 | ?       | 3     | 2       | ? 3            | 0 4 - |
|   |     |     |     | D G | D G D G |       | D . C u | t <b>P</b> . . |       |

Most of the examples start four beats before the *kemong* marking, with the exception of number three. The first example I consider Sukarata’s favorite pattern. I have seen and heard him play this variation numerous times, and it is unique to his style, though nowadays many drummers use this pattern. The second example is basically the same as the first, with a few changed stroke timbres. *Cung* (C) becomes *dag* (D) and *lung* (u) becomes *ge* (G). As we have seen in previous examples, it is the habit of Sukarata to reproduce patterns by maintaining the rhythm while changing timbre. The third example is a ubiquitous *kemong* phrase that many other drummers also use. The last example is a *kekembangan* (development) of variation number three. Sukarata extends the use of the *dag* sound for this phrase, emphasizing it further.

All variations end with one loud *keplak* sound, marked as **P** in the green box, one beat before the *kemong* stroke. This loud sound is a cue for the other musicians that a dynamic change will occur. A good drummer, besides playing louder, will also look at the musicians and provide small physical gestures as an indication that a change is coming.

For proper execution of the *meguru gending* concept, a drummer must understand which *kemong* stroke is most important. Only the one that is a pivot point for the dynamic change (usually closest to the *gong*) should get the attention.

## Kempur Phrases

The third relevant colotomic markers are the *kempur* phrases. In the *pengipuk* section of *Truna Jaya*, the *kempur* will be struck on beats 8, 24, 40, 45, and 47. In Sukarata's *meguru gending* concept, the only *kempur* stroke that should be noted is the first one after the *gong* stroke, which occurs on beat 8. Here, the *kempur* functions as a dynamic turning point from loud playing too soft. As mentioned above, all *gong* phrases are played loudly, and then from the first *kempur* the intensity is reduced. Following are three examples of Sukarata's *kempur* phrases.

Table 3.8 Three variations of *kempur* phrases

|       |   |     |   |     |   |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |
|-------|---|-----|---|-----|---|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| 1     |   |     |   |     |   |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |
| (o) 1 |   |     |   |     |   |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |
| .     | . | t   | P |     |   |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |
| o 2   |   | o 1 |   | ^ 5 |   |   | o 1 |   | ^ 5 |   | o 4 |   | ^ 5 |   | o 1+ |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |
| P     | D | P   | D | t   | P | . | D   | . | P   | t | P   | P | t   | P | .    | D | C | u | . | . | C | u | . | . | C | u |   |  |  |  |  |
| 2     |   |     |   |     |   |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |
| (o) 1 |   |     |   |     |   |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |
| .     | . | t   | P |     |   |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |
| o 2   |   | o 1 |   | ^ 5 |   |   | o 1 |   | ^ 5 |   | o 4 |   | ^ 5 |   | o 1+ |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |
| .     | D | D   | G | D   | P | . | D   | t | P   | t | P   | P | t   | P | .    | D | . | t | P | t | P | t | P | t | P | t | P |  |  |  |  |
| 3     |   |     |   |     |   |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |
| (o) 1 |   |     |   |     |   |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |
| .     | . | t   | P |     |   |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |
| o 2   |   | o 1 |   | ^ 5 |   |   | o 1 |   | ^ 5 |   | o 4 |   | ^ 5 |   | o 1+ |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |
| P     | t | P   | d | C   | P | . | D   | . | D   | . | D   | P | .   | D | G    | D | . | C | u | . | P | t | P | P | . | C | u |  |  |  |  |

In the first example, Sukarata uses the *cung* (C) and *lung* (u) sounds to approach the *kempur*. In the second, the *keplak* sound appears near the end. The third example is a *kekembangan* of examples one and two. It starts with patterns from the first phrase (marked in yellow), followed by the *keplak* sounds of the second phrase (marked in green), and then ends with the *cung* and *lung* sounds of the first example. This method of recombination and reordering is required for a drummer to make the patterns sound different each time a specific colotomic marker is approaching. It gives the drummer a richer collection of patterns.

One notable aspect of the *kempur* phrase is that a *dag* (D) sound will never be used to emphasize the *kempur* stroke. The reason behind this is that *dag* is an intense sound that is used

to lift the piece, while the function of the *kempur* is to the contrary, transitioning the dynamics from loud to soft. Hence, it is not permissible to use the *dag* sound to approach the *kempur*.

### Isen-isen Phrases

The Balinese term *isen-isen* means fillings. In Sukarata’s *meguru gending* method, the *isen-isen* phrases are used to ‘fill in’ the spaces that are not connected to specific colotomic markers. For these phrases, the volume of the ensemble and drums is soft. The duration of the *isen-isen* phrase can be twenty or twenty-one beats, and it lasts from the first *kempur* strike until the *kemong* phrase appears. I will provide two *isen-isen* examples, one played by the *lanang* drummer and the other by the *wadon*.

Table 3.9 *Lanang* drummer *isen-isen* phrase

|         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| ๓ 2     | ๑ 1     | ๙ 5     | ๑ 1     | ๙ 5     | ๖ 4     | ๙ 5     | ๑ 1+    |
| P D P D | t P . D | . P t P | P t P . | D . C u | . . C u | . . C u | t P t P |
| ๓ 2     | ๑ 1     | ๙ 5     | ๑ 1     | ๙ 5     | ๖ 4     | ๙ 5     | ๑ 1-    |
| P d t P | t P P d | t P t P | P d t P | t P P d | t P t P | P C . C | t P t P |
| ๓ 2     | ๑ 1     | ๙ 5     | ๑ 1     | ๖ 4     | ๓ 2     | ๓ 3     | ๖ 4+    |
| P d t P | P t P d | t P t P | t P P d | t P P t | P d C u | . . C u | t P t P |
| ๙ 5     | ๖ 4     | ๓ 3     | ๖ 4     | ๓ 3     | ๓ 2     | ๓ 3     | ๖ 4-    |
| P t P d | t P . D | t P t P | P t P . | D G D . | t P P d | t P . . |         |

In Table 3.9, the white boxes contain the *kempur* phrase. The *isen-isen* phrases start on the *kempur* stroke, highlighted in yellow. In this example, the *lanang* drummer makes a theme of his ability to give more weight to his left hand. As we can see, most of the strokes are *keplak* (P). Since the *lanang* drum has a tighter sound than the *wadon* drum, it rarely uses the *dag* sound and maximizes use of the *keplak* and *cung* sounds. In this example, the *isen-isen* phrase plays for twenty-one beats. It is followed by the *kemong* phrase, shown in the orange boxes.

Now I juxtapose the *lanang* phrase to the *wadon*'s phrase occurring later.

Table 3.10 *Wadon* drummer *isen-isen* phrase

|         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| ⊃ 2     | ⊙ 1     | ^ 5     | ⊙ 1     | ^ 5     | ⊘ 4     | ^ 5     | ⊙ 1+    |
| . D D G | D P . D | t P t P | P t P . | D . C u | t . C u | t . C u | t . t . |
| ⊃ 2     | ⊙ 1     | ^ 5     | ⊙ 1     | ^ 5     | ⊘ 4     | ^ 5     | ⊙ 1-    |
| t . t . | C u t . | t . C u | t . C u | D t C u | D t C u | t . C u | t . t . |
| ⊃ 2     | ⊙ 1     | ^ 5     | ⊙ 1     | ⊘ 4     | ⊃ 2     | ⊗ 3     | ⊘ 4+    |
| t . t . | C u t . | t . C u | t . C u | D t C u | D t C u | t . C u | t P P d |
| ^ 5     | ⊘ 4     | ⊗ 3     | ⊘ 4     | ⊗ 3     | ⊃ 2     | ⊗ 3     | ⊘ 4-    |
| P d t P | t P P d | P d t P | t . D G | . D . G | D t P d | t P . . |         |

The *wadon* begins with the *kempur* phrase in the white boxes, using the *cung* sound to approach the *kempur* stroke. He maintains that idea and expands the *cung* sounds on the *isen-isen* patterns shown in the yellow boxes. The drummer's patterns are filled with the *cung* and *lung* sounds in various ways throughout the passage. In this example, the *isen-isen* phrase is played for twenty beats, slightly shorter than the previous *lanang* example. To provide a different texture approaching the *kemong*, the *wadon* adds many *dag* (D) sounds. Hence, there is an audible timbral transformation. In playing the *isen-isen* phrase, a drummer should have a theme in mind. There should be a connection to both the *kempur* phrase and the following *gong* phrase.

To see how these phrases work together, I will provide an example of one complete *gong* cycle in the following transcription.<sup>45</sup>

Table 3.11 One *gong* cycle drumming example

|           |         |         |         |         |         |           |         |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|
| (⊙) 1     |         |         |         |         |         |           |         |
| . . t P   |         |         |         |         |         |           |         |
| ⊃ 2       | ⊙ 1     | ^ 5     | ⊙ 1     | ^ 5     | ⊘ 4     | ^ 5       | ⊙ 1+    |
| . D D G   | D P . D | t P t P | P t P . | D . C u | t . C u | t . C u   | t . t . |
| ⊃ 2       | ⊙ 1     | ^ 5     | ⊙ 1     | ^ 5     | ⊘ 4     | ^ 5       | ⊙ 1-    |
| t . t .   | C u t . | t . C u | t . C u | D t C u | D t C u | t . C u   | t . t . |
| ⊃ 2       | ⊙ 1     | ^ 5     | ⊙ 1     | ⊘ 4     | ⊃       | ⊗ 3       | ⊘ 4+    |
| t . t .   | C u t . | t . C u | t . C u | D t C u | D t C u | t . C u   | t P P d |
| ^ 5       | ⊘ 4     | ⊗ 3     | ⊘ 4     | ⊗ 3     | ⊃       | ⊗ 3       | ⊘ 4-    |
| P d t P   | t P P d | P d t P | t . D G | . D . G | D t P d | t P . .   | . . t P |
| ^ 5       | ⊘ 4     | ⊗ 3     | ⊘ 4     | ⊗ 3     | ⊃ 2     | ⊗ 3       | ⊘ 4+    |
| . D P D   | t P . D | P D t P | t P P . | D P . D | P D t P | D P . D   | P D t P |
| ⊃ 2       | ⊗ 3     | ⊘ 4     | ^ 5     | ⊘ 4+    | ⊗ 3     | ⊃ 2+      | (⊙) 1   |
| D P . . D | P D t P | t P P d | t P P . | D G D G | D . C u | t P . . D |         |

<sup>45</sup> The video can be found on the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0-tl6M3iuk>

This cycle starts with the *lanang* part shown in the blue boxes and then switches to the *wadon* part, which are represented by the yellow boxes. The *wadon* drummer enters playing the *kempur* phrase, and the dynamics change from loud to soft. The *isen-isen* phrase then follows. We can see that the *wadon* drummer wants to emphasize the *cung* sound, starting from the strokes approaching the *kempur* and also within the *isen-isen* phrase as highlighted in the green boxes. As a cue to prepare the change of dynamics, the *wadon* drummer plays his *kemong* phrase, emphasizing the *dag* sound. Following that is the *gong* phrase, in the red boxes. Thematically this phrase is a continuation of the *kemong* phrase, which focuses on the *dag* sound.

From this transcription, we can see how Sukarata's *meguru gending* method is implemented in playing the *pengipuk* section of *Truna Jaya*. There is a degree of freedom to improvise, framed within certain corridors by the colotomic markers. Hence, drummers will select patterns that match accordingly with the piece.

### ***Pengipuk: The Dancer and Drummer in Flirtatious Interaction***

Apart from understanding the *meguru gending* concept and implementing it within the *Truna Jaya* piece, it is also important for the drummer to know how to “dance” through drumming, and in turn to interact in sound with a dancer's choreographed and spontaneous movements. The best *kebyar* drummers ‘dance’ while they play, using their torsos, arms, hands and facial expressions to help the music, show the degree to which they have mastered it, and to add drama to the performance (Tenzer 1991, 49). Here I examine that relationship through a close analysis of drummer-dancer interactions in the *pengipuk* section of *Truna Jaya*.

The term *pengipuk* itself evokes romantic attachment. If the *pengipuk* section of the *Oleg Tamulilingan* dance (as discussed in Chapter 2) explicitly tells a story of intimacy between a male and female bumblebee, that of *Truna Jaya* evokes a less explicit manifestation of courtship and romantic engagement, this one between the drummer and the dancer.



Figure 3.1 Dancer-drummer interaction in the *pengipuk* section of the *Truna Jaya* dance

The dancer starts off this section by performing *ngipuk*<sup>46</sup> movements symbolizing flirtatious actions through which the drummer is enticed to interact; it is a choreographic/musical seduction. She starts by positioning herself at center stage, performing *ngipuk*. After one *gong* cycle, she approaches the *wadon* drummer, who sits to the front of the *lanang* player. They then interact, dance, and ‘flirt,’ in keeping with the *pengipuk* theme. It is vital for the drummer to respond to the dancer by looking at her, moving his hands responsively, and performing body gestures and facial expressions suggestive of his attraction.

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<sup>46</sup> In general, *ngipuk* are movements performed by a dancer to invite another dancer or drummer to interact with them. In the *Truna Jaya* dance, the *ngipuk* movements are shown through the fluid motions (*gerakan mengalir*) of the dancer’s hands, moving left and right, which are followed by the body and facial expressions. These motions are performed mostly from a kneeling position.

After *ngipuk* with the *wadon* drummer, the dancer will approach the second drummer, the *lanang*. The same sequence of interactions occurs here. This is also a good reason for the two drummers to take turns playing the *kendang tunggal* in this section. If the dancer reaches out to the *lanang* drummer and receives no reaction, then the interaction will *mati*, or dead. On the other hand, if the *lanang* drummer responds by playing the *kendang* and “dancing” with the dancer, the performance will be *hidup*, or alive. Of course, each drummer has their own way of expressing themselves. Sukarata tells me that a drummer must not be like a *patung* or statue, which is stiff and has no sense of response with the dancer. If that is the case, Sukarata says it is “*palas, cara lengis ajak yeh*” (separated, like oil and water); both will perform by themselves, but not with any unity.<sup>47</sup>

Made Ayu Desiari, the dancer on this video recording, mentioned several interesting points in our discussion. According to Desiari, a dancer needs to understand the music as the drummer must understand the dance. There are two vital musical moments that the dancer must notice. The first is at the second *kemong* stroke on beat 32. This mark cues the dancer to perform a strong *sledet* (flicking eye movement) on the *kemong* stroke, followed by a transition to a new spot on stage. This move can be from center stage to the drummer, or from the *wadon* to the *lanang* drummer. The second important musical marker is the *kempur* strokes on beats 45 and 47, before the *gong*. Desiari mentions that the music provides several cues that need to be accented. In this case, the two *kempur* strokes before the *gong* should be emphasized by the *sledet* movement, making the relation between the music and dance tighter and more integrated.

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<sup>47</sup> The dancer-drummer interaction of the *pengipuk* section of the Truna Jaya dance can be seen in the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxZ3oZBa8Jg>

Through this interaction, the performance becomes alive and more attractive, showcasing both the dancers' and drummers' virtuoso skills.

### Conclusion

Proper implementation of the *meguru gending* concept emphasizes the importance of the melody with the colotomic markers while also supporting the piece's character. The concept provides the outline for dynamic changes and for how the drummer should control the piece's flow. We can see the flow of the dynamics in the graph below.



Figure 3.2 Graphic of the dynamics

When the section starts (on *gong*), it is played loudly. As the first *kempur* approaches, the volume decreases through the *kempur* phrase. It is important to note that the end of a *kempur* phrase should never be played with a *dag* sound. Between the first *kempur* and the second *kemong*, the drummer plays *isen-isen* phrases. This is followed by the *kemong* phrase, which indicates that the piece is about to get louder or *nguncab*. The *gong* phrase starts from the *kemong* stroke, played loudly, and continues until it finally reaches the *gong*.

Each drummer must have this *meguru gending* idea in mind while they are playing, understanding where the dynamic changes should be and how to approach the relevant markers. It is also crucial for the drummer to know numerous patterns and have the creativity to rearrange, modify, and improvise in each phrase to make the drumming unpredictable for the audience.

Improvisation is an act of composing. Joseph Auner describes Gustav Mahler's compositional skills as "like playing with building blocks, where new buildings are created again

and again, using the same blocks. Indeed, these blocks have been there, ready to be used since childhood, the only time that is designed for gathering” (Auner 2013, 22). Improvisation in *kendang tunggal* is well-described by this analogy; drummers build on materials that are already stored, choosing the correct one to synchronize with the melody. Sukarata’s method of *meguru gending* is a powerful tool for solo drumming that can be used as a framework for drummers to fill in the suitable patterns for the designated structure.

## CHAPTER 4

### ***MEGURU IGEL: A DRUMMING METHOD FOR ACCOMPANYING DANCE***

This chapter examines the Balinese *Jauk Keras* dance, a type of solo dance performed in an improvisational style to the accompaniment of gamelan *gong kebyar* music. The gamelan is directed by the solo drummer, whose own improvised part is explicitly guided by the dancer's movements, mood, and direction. I highlight the process of accompaniment, demonstrating how the drummer acts as the intermediary between the dancer and the rest of the musicians of the *gong kebyar* ensemble.

My approach will be to examine this drumming style in relation to the overarching concept of *meguru igel* (literally, following the dancer), as outlined by Sukarata. In Sukarata's definitional vocabulary, *meguru igel* comprises four principal dance elements that the drummer must respond to improvise competently in the *Jauk Keras* idiom. These are *metuwek* (held stance), *igel aksen* (sporadic accents in movement), various *angsels* (accents at cadence points), and the complementary forms of *malpal* (marching) and *milpil* (double-time marching). By taking the dancer's lead in providing appropriate musical complements to dance motion via this multidimensional *meguru igel* method, drummers at the highest level create a sonic form of art that at once provides a visual analog to *Jauk Keras* dancing and the necessary direction for the gamelan music as a whole to unfold in performance.

#### **The Music and Dance Discourse**

Many studies on Balinese drumming (see Asnawa 1991; Bakan 1999; Tenzer 2000a; M. M. Hood 2001; Sudirana 2009; Tilley 2019) have argued that it is vital for a drummer to understand choreographic cues in order to provide signals to which the musicians can respond;

however, the process of *how* a drummer accompanies a dance, including the *Jauk Keras* dance in particular, has never been discussed in detail.

The discourse surrounding the dance-music relationship is not a new topic within scholarship, as there is a significant literature that explores how these two related entities work in relation to one another in the context of diverse musicultural traditions. According to anthropologist Judith Lynne Hanna, “dance and music are similar but distinct phenomena, which although at times are separate may be intertwined on an equal status, or one may be dependent upon the other” (1982, 68). Furthermore, Hanna outlines four types of relationships between music and dance: in the first, the two are unrelated; in the second, dance depends on music; in the third, music depends on dance; and finally, in the fourth, the dance and music are considered equal (Hanna 1982, 57).

Terminology is also significant. The ethnomusicologist Kendra Stepputat, a specialist on Balinese music and dance, avoids the terms “music” and “dance” altogether, instead employing the terms “sound” and “movement” to maintain a more neutral, encompassing stance on the matter (Stepputat 2017, 32). Through her observations of the intentional sounds and movements of Balinese performances, she suggests that the interrelations between the two can be separated into three categories or types. The first type is interconnection, which occurs when sound and movement are mutually connected; this definition implies a very strong and preconditioned relationship between sound and movement that changes little from one performance to the next, as well as the lack of a mutual, ad hoc influence from one to the other. A composition or choreography with a fixed form exemplifies this category. The second type is interdependence, which implies that both parts are subject to a mutual or reciprocal dependency and thus could not exist or develop without the other. An example of this relationship is a performance with a fixed

structure overall but that allows variations. The last category is interaction, which Stepputat defines as a mutual or reciprocal action or influence between the two phenomena. She mentions that unstructured and improvisational forms make up part of this category (see Stepputat 2017, 32–33).

Whether the relationship between music and dance is considered fixed, flexible, or improvisatory is particular to each culture, and is also to specific performance contexts within a given cultural context. In my interview with ethnomusicologist I Wayan Rai S, he stated that the relationship between music and dance in Balinese performing arts can be categorized into three specific groups based on the power relations regarding who is leading, or *memimpin* (see also Sustiwati et al. 2011, 69–70). The first category is where the composition is fixed and the dancer(s) follows the music. Most *gong kebyar* dance creations (*tari kreasi baru*) are categorized within this group, such as *Truna Jaya*, *Kebyar Duduk*, *Oleg Tamulilingan*, and *Margapati*. One of the primary reasons the composition is set is because of the sophisticated ornamentations (*kotekan*) and the number of dance sections: in other words, the dance follows the music. Although groups occasionally provide variations and different arrangements, it is still considered a fixed structure in Balinese performances.

As the opposite of the first, the second category occurs when musicians accompany the dancers by following their movements. This approach is often found among older performance styles such as *Arja*, *Topeng*, *Jauk Keras*, *Jauk Manis*, and *Barong* dance. Performances in these categories typically have a simple musical structure and short, repeating melodies. Most of these performances are based on improvisatory movements while still maintaining a specific character of the dance. The style of improvisation is not free; rather, the choreography stays within certain accepted idioms known as *pakem*.

The last category involves a reciprocal relationship between the dancer and musician. The performance might begin with a more fixed choreography, but may change later, for example, by shifting responsibility to the dancer as the leader. Examples of styles within this category include *Kecak*, *Telek*, and *Gambuh*.

While there has been extensive scholarly attention to different genres and styles of Balinese dance, and while that body of literature has provided important insights into the integral music-dance interaction (see de Zoete and Spies 1939; Tenzer 1991; Bandem and deBoer 1995; Dibia and Ballinger 2004; Sadguna 2010; Steputat 2017; M. M. Hood 2017; Schatz 2020; M. M. Hood 2020), the type of very specific, granular analysis of drumming-dance interaction to which we now turn our attention in my treatment of the *Jauk Keras* dance is unprecedented to date. The attention to analytical detail represented here offers a key step forward towards deeper comprehension of the inner and outer workings of Balinese performing arts.

In examining how dancer-drummer interaction works in the *Jauk Keras* dance, I utilize Sukarata's third concept, *meguru igel*, as the basis of my analysis. As previously mentioned, *meguru igel* is a method for musicians that is especially pertinent for drummers in learning how to react and anticipate the movements of specific dances that do not have a fixed choreography. A solo drummer accompanies *Jauk Keras* dance in the *kendang tunggal* style, which involves anticipating the dancers' movements while simultaneously showcasing their skills through the delivery of improvisatory and spontaneous drumming patterns. A close analysis of this drumming style demonstrates how the dance (*igel*) becomes the teacher (*guru*), guiding the drummer in their specific design and performance practices.

## General Overview of The *Jauk Keras* Dance

*Jauk* is a type of masked dance in Balinese performing arts, further categorized as a strong male dance or *tari putra keras*. Although most dancers are male, it does not imply that only men can dance *Jauk*; this characterization is largely based on a set of symbols and codifications embodied within the dance (Dibia 1989, 13). There are two primary types of *Jauk* dances in Bali: *Jauk Keras* and *Jauk Manis*. The word *Jauk* refers to *nyauk* or *nyaup*, which means “to compress.” This name refers to the signature stance of the dance (*agem*), which involves a hand position that depicts the action of compressing something to make it more compact; the use of such a gesture differentiates *Jauk* from other dances in Bali. The second word of both dances’ titles also conveys the character of the dance: *keras* translates as “strong” or “fierce,” whereas *manis* means “refined.” Over time, several other names have been attached to these dances: *Jauk Keras* is also colloquially known as *Jauk Durga*, *Jauk Enggang*, and *Jauk Barak*, while *Jauk Manis* is known by other names such as *Jauk Longgor*, *Jauk Ngep*, and *Jauk Putih*.<sup>48</sup> In this dissertation, I only use the term *Jauk Keras* to avoid further confusion, and the parameters of *Jauk Manis* are not discussed in this project.

In my interviews with three accomplished *Jauk* dancers—I Made Djimat, I Nyoman Cerita, and I Gede Oka Suryanegara—they all agreed that the *Jauk Keras* dance likely originated from an older form of performance known as *Telek*. There are several versions of the *Telek* story. One of the most common versions derives from the old *lontar* (palm leaf) manuscript titled *Barong Swari*. This manuscript tells the story of when Dewa Siwa cursed his wife, Dewi Uma, and sent her from Siwaloka (Siwa’s holy heaven) to earth to become Dewi Durga. It is believed

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<sup>48</sup> The *Jauk Keras* mask is usually painted red, but according to I Nyoman Cerita, there are several instances in which the mask is painted white. The one common feature of all *Jauk Keras* masks is the depiction of a face with bulging eyes and teeth in an *enggang* (open mouth) posture.

that Dewi Durga is the ruler of the dark world that controls evil spirits (*bhuta kala*) and creates plague. To end this disaster, the three gods known as Tri Murti (Bhatara Brahma, Bhatara Wishnu, and Bhatara Iswara) traveled down to earth to conduct purification. Bhatara Brahma transformed into *topeng bang*, Bhatara Wishnu into *telek*, and Bhatara Iswara became *barong*.<sup>49</sup> This purification story now provides the philosophical basis for the Telek dance, which is only performed when a village disaster occurs.

By the mid-twentieth century, the functions of the performing arts were expanding rapidly; art forms that were solely for ritual purposes in previous eras were now becoming forms of entertainment. Many dances are now independent or free dances (*tari lepas*) detached from their earlier forms: for example, *Jauk Keras* no longer exists as a part of Telek (see Picard 1990, 50).<sup>50</sup> According to Djimat, *Jauk Keras* has been used as a standard dance repertoire in a *Legong* performance.<sup>51</sup> None of my interlocutors were able to specify exactly when *Jauk Keras* became a form of *tari lepas*. In previous eras, the *bebarongan* ensemble would typically accompany the *Jauk* as part of the *Telek* dance; today, however, it is common to witness the dance performed by a *gong kebyar* ensemble, a genre that has gained significant popularity across the entire island.<sup>52</sup> Any *bebarongan* repertoire can be played with the *gong kebyar* because it has the same *pelog* scale. Some might also argue that it is easier to play on *gong kebyar* because, in addition to the

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<sup>49</sup> For other versions of the story, see Covarrubias 1937; Eiseman 1990; Bandem and deBoer 1995; Dibia and Ballinger 2004; Schatz 2020.

<sup>50</sup> According to Michel Picard, the increase in tourism greatly stimulated the creation of “free dance” performances (*tari lepas*, also called *tarian bisu*, i.e., “mute dances”). These dances are “free” in the sense that they are detached from any ties to a story of dramatic or ritual nature, and the dances simply follow one another in a haphazard fashion. Some dances, including Baris, Topeng, and Jauk, were removed from their original theatrical context to be transformed into solo dances (Picard 1990, 50).

<sup>51</sup> The term *tari Legong*, or *Legong* dance, has two meanings; it can refer to the specific *Legong Keraton* dance genre, but it can also refer to dances that are *tari lepas* or independent dances not attached to a certain dance drama.

<sup>52</sup> There has not been any concrete evidence that indicates when the *bebarongan* ensemble emerged. Nonetheless, it is agreed by scholars and practitioners of Balinese gamelan that the *bebarongan* was a much older ensemble compared to the *gong kebyar* music.

fact that both repertoires use the same scale, each *gangsa* consists of ten keys, which is twice the number of keys as the *bebarongan* ensemble.

As a *tari lepas*, *Jauk Keras* no longer revolves around the story that originated from the *Telek* dance. The *Jauk Keras* dance depicts the story of a fierce demonic king in the woods. The character is best identified by the costuming; in addition to the unique mask, another clear marker of the *Jauk Keras* dance is the dancer's headdress called *gelungan* made from cowskin, carved with Balinese ornaments, and painted in gold. This type of *gelungan* is called *menur candi kurung*, which can only be used for regal characters such as the king. The dancer also wears several layers of *awir*, a decorated piece of fabric with ornaments from pearls and gold. *Awirs* will be tied on strings and placed on top of the dancers' *keris* or a dagger in its sheath. The *keris* is also a symbol that this is a male dance. Each *Jauk* dancer wears white gloves with a four-inch fingernail glued to the tips, which further contributes to the scary and fierce imagery of the character. All aspects of the dance costume thus constitute *Jauk Keras* as a strong male dance depicting a character with a powerful, demonic personality.

### **The Structure of the Performance**

Before going into details about the specific rhythmic patterns, a drummer must understand the structure, melody, and *kotekan* (interlocking figurations), as these features of the piece will fundamentally affect how they play the *kendang*. The structure of the performance is divided into three parts: the *papeson*, *pengadeng*, and *pekaad*. The name of the first section, *papeson*, derives from the word *pesu*, which means "to go out." In this case, it either refers to the first time the dancer appears on stage or the introduction. The second section, *pengadeng*, comes from the word *adeng*, which means "slow." Here, the tempo decreases significantly compared to

the first and last sections. The *pekaad*, a term that originates from the word *mekaad*, which means “to leave,” is the final section of the performance in which the dancer departs the stage.

It is also crucial for the drummer and dancer to understand the different musical structures used in a specific repertoire. The particular type of form that is found in the *Jauk Keras* dance is known as *bapang*. Identifying a specific musical structure can be achieved through an analysis of its colotomic structure. The colotomic instruments in the *gong kebyar* ensemble consist of the *gongs*, *kempur*, *kemong*, and *kajar*. Since the *Jauk Keras* dance originates from *Telek*, which was initially accompanied by the *bebarongan* ensemble, the colotomic instrument identifiers are *gong*, *kajar*, and *kemong*, with the *kempur* excluded.

The *papeson* and *pekaad* share the same melody and structure: both have an eight-beat cycle consisting of a four-beat melody that is played twice to fulfill a complete cycle. This particular melody is also known as *Bapang Durga*, commonly used to accompany the *Rangda* dance. The beginning of the cycle occurs on beat 8 represented by the sound of the *gong*, which also acts as the strongest beat. The other elements that constitute a *bapang* structure are the *kemong* strikes on beat 4 and *kajar* pulses on every beat. While the length of the *pengadeng* section is twice as long, it also falls under the *bapang* category. The strongest count is thus on beat 16 and the second strongest is beat 8, which is punctuated by the *kemong*. The tempo of the *pengadeng* section is much slower and is meant to act as an augmentation of the *papeson* and *pekaad* sections.

The transcription for the melody of the *papeson*, *pengadeng*, and *pekaad* sections of *Jauk Keras* can be seen in the figure below.

( 2 ) 2  
 [ 4 5 1 2 - 4 5 1 ( 2 ) 2 ]

Figure 4.1 Melody for the *papeson* and *pekaad* sections

( 2 ) 2  
 2 4 1 5 5 3 4 2 -  
 2 4 1 5 5 1 3 ( 2 ) 2 ]

Figure 4.2 Melody for the *pengadeng* section

The *kotekan* or interlocking figuration of these melodies is fairly straightforward.<sup>53</sup> In my experience of performing Balinese gamelan music, *kotekan* is a method for ornamenting a melodic theme called *bantang gending*. Some scholars use the term *pokok* as well, although in everyday practice, musicians are more likely to use the term *bantang gending*. The elaboration traditionally consists of two sections known as *polos* and *sangsih*. The *polos* mostly align with the *bantang gending* while the *sangsih* fills in the rhythmic space to create the effect of interlocking. Several people interpret *polos* and *sangsih* as playing on the on and off beats, respectively; although that is partially true, the division of these two elements are also determined by other considerations in the music, such as efficiency, the scalar directions of the melody, and innovations. In contemporary literature, the methods and styles of *kotekan* have grown remarkably; not only do they separate the ornamentations into only two parts (*polos* and *sangsih*), some pieces even provide individual *gangsa* players with their own patterns.

<sup>53</sup> Several scholars have provided their perspectives on the idea of *kotekan*. Wayne Vitale mentions that *kotekan* is the rapid interlocking figuration that permeates nearly all *kebyar* compositions. It creates a unique sonic impression: a group of *gangsa* (bronze metallophones) struck with hard wooden mallets produce an intricately patterned layer of sound above the sustained tones of the lower instruments; the *reyong*, a row of small tuned *gongs* played by four musicians, creates a different (but equally complex) figuration of a softer attack and sound color; and leading them all are a pair of drummers who play yet another kind of interlocking pattern (Vitale 1990, 2). Michael Tenzer, on the other hand, states that *kotekan* is usually expressed in English as interlocking parts; although it sounds as one melody, it is actually composed of two interdependent musical lines that are incomplete when played alone and dependent exclusively on each other for obtaining the desired result. Such a result can range from stately murmuring in some of the older, simpler styles of *kotekan*, to extroverted and jazzy rhythmic acrobatics in modern music. The tight interaction of the two parts produces a supple texture that is pointillistic in detail and fluid as a whole (Tenzer 1991, 46).

In order to effectively practice the different kinds of improvisatory performance described throughout this dissertation, it is mandatory for a drummer to understand the melody and *kotekan* since these aspects of the music play a significant role in conveying how a drummer thinks about the patterns. There are two types of *kotekan* applied in the *papeson* and *pekaad* sections in the provided recording. One motive is used during the fast sections, especially in the *angsel lantang*, which is performed at 185 bpm, while the second motive is used in a more moderate tempo played at 170 bpm. The *kotekan* of both sections can be seen in the figure below.

|    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|----|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| M  | ( 2 )   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| po | 2 . 3 . |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| sa | . 2 . 1 |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| M  | [ 4     | 5       | 1       | 2—      | 4       | 5       | 1       | ( 2 ) ] |
| po | 2 . 3 . | 2 . 3 . | 2 . 3 . | 2 . 3 . | 2 . 3 . | 2 . 3 . | 2 . 3 . | 2 . 3 . |
| sa | . 2 . 1 | . 2 . 1 | . 2 . 1 | . 2 . 1 | . 2 . 1 | . 2 . 1 | . 2 . 1 | . 2 . 1 |

Figure 4.3 *Kotekan* style for the *papeson* and *pekaad* sections for the *angsel lantang* sequence, played at 185 bpm

While this type of *kotekan* is the most common type of ornamentation used in the *Jauk Keras* dance, Sukarata utilized another arrangement during the moderate tempo section. He explained that it would be more challenging for the musicians and convey a different level of intensity between the faster and medium-tempo sections. The second *kotekan* style is notated below.

|    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|----|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| M  | (?) 2   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| po | ㄉ . ㄱ ㄉ |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|    | 2 . 1 2 |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| sa | . ㄱ ㄴ . |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|    | . 3 4 . |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| M  | [ ㄴ     | ㄱ       | ㄱ       | ㄉ -     | ㄴ       | ㄱ       | (?) ]   |         |
|    | [ 4     | 5       | 1       | 2 -     | 4       | 5       | (2) ]   |         |
| po | . ㄱ ㄱ . | ㄉ . ㄱ ㄉ | . ㄱ ㄱ . | ㄉ . ㄱ ㄉ | . ㄱ ㄱ . | ㄉ . ㄱ ㄉ | . ㄱ ㄱ . | ㄉ . ㄱ ㄉ |
|    | . 2 1 . | 2 . 1 2 | . 2 1 . | 2 . 1 2 | . 2 1 . | 2 . 1 2 | . 2 1 . | 2 . 1 2 |
| sa | ㄱ . ㄴ ㄱ | . ㄱ ㄴ . | ㄱ . ㄴ ㄱ | . ㄱ ㄴ . | ㄱ . ㄴ ㄱ | . ㄱ ㄴ . | ㄱ . ㄴ ㄱ | . ㄱ ㄴ . |
|    | 3 . 4 3 | . 3 4 . | 3 . 4 3 | . 3 4 . | 3 . 4 3 | . 3 4 . | 3 . 4 3 | . 3 4 . |

Figure 4.4 *Kotekan* style for the *papeson* and *pekaad* sections moderate tempo, played at 170 bpm

For the *pengadeng* section, the *kotekan* used is called *norot adeng*, in which the *polos* part follows the *bantang gending* (melodic theme line). At the same time, the *sangsih* plays up a fourth scale degree from the *polos* elaboration; this style of harmonization is referred to as *ngempat*.

|    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|----|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| M  | (?) 2   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| po | ㄉ ㄉ ㄉ ㄉ |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|    | 2 3 2 3 |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| sa | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|    | 5 1 5 1 |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| M  | ㄉ       | ㄴ       | ㄱ       | ㄱ       | ㄱ       | ㄱ       | ㄉ -     |         |
|    | 2       | 4       | 1       | 5       | 5       | 3       | 4       | 2       |
| po | ㄉ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄴ ㄱ ㄴ ㄱ | ㄴ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ |
|    | 2 2 1 5 | 4 5 4 5 | 4 5 5 1 | 5 1 5 1 | 5 3 3 4 | 3 4 3 4 | 3 2 2 3 | 2 3 2 3 |
| sa | ㄱ ㄱ ㄴ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄴ | ㄱ ㄴ ㄱ ㄴ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ |
|    | 5 5 4 3 | 2 3 2 3 | 2 3 3 4 | 3 4 3 4 | 3 1 1   | 1 2 1 2 | 1 5 5 1 | 5 1 5 1 |
| M  | ㄉ       | ㄴ       | ㄱ       | ㄱ       | ㄱ       | ㄱ       | (?) ]   |         |
|    | 2       | 4       | 1       | 5       | 5       | 1       | (2) ]   |         |
| po | ㄱ ㄱ ㄴ ㄱ | ㄴ ㄱ ㄴ ㄱ | ㄴ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ |
|    | 2 3 4 5 | 4 5 4 5 | 4 5 5 1 | 5 1 5 1 | 5 1 1 2 | 1 2 1 2 | 1 2 2 3 | 2 3 2 3 |
| sa | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄴ | ㄱ ㄴ ㄱ ㄴ | ㄱ ㄴ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄴ ㄱ ㄴ ㄱ | ㄴ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ | ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ |
|    | 5 1 2 3 | 2 3 2 3 | 2 3 3 4 | 3 4 3 4 | 4 4 5   | 4 5 4 5 | 4 5 5 1 | 5 1 5 1 |

Figure 4.5 *Kotekan* style for the *pengadeng* section

Pursuant to this general overview of the *Jauk Keras* dance and its musical structure, the following discussion turns its focus to the main subject of this chapter: implementing the *meguru*

*igel* method in solo drum dance accompaniment. Sukarata's concept of drumming accompaniment for improvisatory dances such as *Jauk Keras* outlines what the drummer should play and how they should react to specific movements.

### **Implementation of the *Meguru Igel* Concept**

It is the dancer who controls all aspects of the performance. The drummer is supposed to anticipate the dancer's next moves and not only perform the drum patterns that match the movements, but also execute them in a way that enhances the dancer's personal subtleties and dynamics. (Spiller 2001, 155)

Though specific to Sundanese dance-music traditions of West Java, the above quotation from Henry Spiller might be applied equally well to the dynamics of dancer-drummer interaction in the Balinese *Jauk Keras* dance. In *Jauk Keras* performance, the dancer must accent their movements in certain ways or at certain positions around their body to allow the drummer to pick up the cues and transfer them to the musicians. Deep knowledge of gamelan music, whether gained through actual gamelan performance or more passively, is essential. Cerita states that "it would be great if a dancer can play gamelan; if not, [they should] at least have a sensitivity of [the] music. The dancer and drummer must *kawin* (be married), in harmony as one." Djimat has a similar opinion in suggesting that the dancer-drummer relationship "*sing dadi balu*" (cannot be divorced): a dancer needs to understand the precise place to insert an accented movement (*angsel*). The emphasis on this reciprocal harmonic relationship, known in Balinese as *adung*, is the critical element of a successful performance. If it is not connected accordingly, it will be *balu* or *palas* (divorced).

Furthermore, Cerita mentions that a drummer must carefully observe the dancer to identify their preferences in dancing style. From the moment the dancer appears on stage, the

drummer must be vigilant. A great drummer does not need to memorize every detail of the dance but must understand which movements require a musical response.

Drum accompaniment for the *Jauk Keras* dance is played in the *kendang tunggal* (solo drumming) style. Each drummer has a unique style and aspects of technique and style are passed from drummer to drummer and generation to generation. Sukarata acknowledges the strong influence of the late drummer Nang Otret from Kerobokan, Badung—a close friend of Sukarata’s grandfather, Regog—on his own distinctive style. When Sukarata was a young child, Nang Otret would come to visit Regog at his house. While sitting in the *bale*, Regog told Otret “*Edengang kendang Jauk’e pang dingehange ajak Ketut*” (Play your *Jauk* patterns, so Ketut [Sukarata] can hear).” Sukarata was amazed at what he was seeing and hearing. According to Sukarata, Otret emphasized his patterns mainly on the left hand, only using the *dag* on the right hand for *angsel*s. Despite being very young, Sukarata managed to memorize several patterns and develop them. Sukarata’s early encounters with Otret and his creative approaches directly influenced the master drummer’s unique style for *Jauk Keras*.

Sukarata’s ability to perform virtuoso drumming skills from a young age led to many invitations to play *kendang* in various villages. One memory that he often shares with me is the story of accompanying Anak Agung Oka Sading, a renowned *Jauk Keras* dancer from Sading village in Badung. From the 1950s to 1980s, there were only a few *Jauk* dancers who received adequate recognition for their skills, including I Made Djimat, Anak Agung Oka Sading, Ida Bagus Raka Bongkasa, and Anak Agung Mangku Tegaltamu. These dancers were incredibly fastidious when selecting a drummer to accompany them while dancing *Jauk Keras*. If the drummers did not play as the dancers desired, they would not hesitate to yell and demand that they practice more before having the courage to come on stage again.

On one temple ceremony occasion, Oka Sading was invited to dance *Jauk Keras* and Sukarata was playing *kendang*. Since they had met on stage several times prior, Oka Sading was confident that both would achieve *adung*. Before the performance started, Oka Sading said to Sukarata, “*Tut, nyanan ajak bagi honor’e.*” (Ketut, let's split my honorarium after the performance). This statement was a joke because players do not receive money for temple ceremonies, but it indicates Oka Sading’s respect for Sukarata: he felt comfortable dancing and was confident that the performance would be effective and well-crafted.

One is reminded of Henry Spiller’s research on the relationship between the *ronggeng* dancer and the drummer within Sundanese culture. Spiller states that “a dancer might prefer one drummer, who knows his style and predilections, over another. However, these preferred drummers also know how to dance so that the dancer is always reminded of upcoming musical cadences. Drummers are capable of leading dancers through a performance and minimizing any shortcomings in musical knowledge the dancer might have” (Spiller 2001, 155). Spiller’s statement is in line with a message that Sukarata often tells me: “*Pak dadi juru kendang, harus tahu igel. Yen juru kendang sing nawang igel, luwungan eda nyemak kendang.*” (I, as a drummer, must know the dance. If a drummer does not understand the dance, it is better for him not to play the drums). Sukarata’s sensitivity to the choreography was achieved by understanding the *meguru igel* concept, which encompasses four ideas: *metuwek*, *igel aksen*, various *angsels*, and *malpal* and *milpil*.

## *Metuwek*

Every Balinese dance has a unique characteristic that can be seen in the basic stationary position called *agem*.<sup>54</sup> There are two types of *agem*: *agem kanan* (right *agem*) and *agem kiri* (left *agem*). When conducting an *agem kanan*, the dancer's body weight rests on the right foot, while the left foot points outward at a 45-degree angle called *tapak sirang pada*. These *agem*s can occur while the dancer is in a high standing position called *agem duwur* or in a lower stance called *agem beten*.<sup>55</sup> Besides the feet positioning, *agem* also involves hand posture. In the *Jauk Keras* dance, the hands are in the *nyauk* (to compress) position while maintaining the flickering of the extended fingernails attached to the gloves. The shoulders are raised, and the stomach must be tucked in so that the chest is lifted, which allows the dancer to appear more gallant. *Agem* becomes a pivot point from which all accented movements are derived.



Figure 4.6 *Jauk Keras* in *agem kanan* position

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<sup>54</sup> In his book, Dibia defines *agem* as a non-locomotive stance (Dibia 2013, 64).

<sup>55</sup> Several dancers have other terms for these *agem*s. The *agem duwur* are also called *agem tegeh*, while the *agem beten* is often said to be *ngaed*.

The first element of the *meguru igel* concept that a drummer must understand occurs when a dancer conducts *metuwek*. This is performed when the dancer is in an *agem* position and does not make any significant movements requiring a drummer's response. The dancer's mask is fixed on one location while the dancer makes small and subtle movements with their upper body. *Metuwek* is the conduct of *ngidupang tapel* or bringing the mask to life. By focusing on one point, the aesthetic understanding is that the dancer brings their soul into the mask. The music will be played softly until the dancer provides a cue. It is vital that a drummer has many stock patterns for this introduction; as Sukarata states, "*Harus liu ngelah daya, pang sing tawange gedig'e.*" (You must have lots of ideas [drumming patterns] for people not to recognize your patterns easily). The played patterns result from well-known stock patterns that are then combined and altered to create even more sophisticated drumming rhythms. In the *meguru igel* drumming style for *Jauk Keras*, Sukarata mainly emphasizes the *keplak* and *cung* sounds. The *dag* on the right hand is also occasionally used. Below are several examples of the *isen-isen* and its permutations for the *metuwek* movements.<sup>56</sup>

Below are two examples of Sukarata's stock phrase patterns, also known as *pupuh*, which I notate as Pupuh A and B. Inside of the patterns, I identify smaller units or phrases using colors. Pattern A, beats 8 and 1 (bracketed in blue) are played three times until beat 6 where a new phrase begins, here colored in green. In Pupuh B, I want to emphasize beats 2 and 3, bracketed in yellow. The combinations of the three phrases in Pupuh A and B are used as resources for creating various permutations.

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<sup>56</sup> *Isen-isen* in Balinese means fillings; in relation to drumming, *isen-isen* is used to 'fill in' the spaces where it is not used for specific colotomic phrases or not accenting a certain dance movement.

Table 4.1 *Isen-isen* permutations

|   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|   | (?) 2   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| A | t P t P | ^ 5     | o 1     | o 2 -   | o 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | (?) 2   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | o 4     | t P t P | P d C u | t P t P | P d C u | t P C u | t P C u | t P t P |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| B | t P t P | t P t P | t P P P | t P t P | P d t P | t P t P | t P P P | (?) 2   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| C | t P t P | ^ 5     | o 1     | o 2 -   | o 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | (?) 2   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | o 4     | t P t P | t P P P | t P t P | P d C u | t P t P | t P P P |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| D | t P t P | ^ 5     | o 1     | o 2 -   | o 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | (?) 2   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | o 4     | t P t P | t P P P | t P t P | t P P P | t P C u | t P C u |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| E | t P t P | ^ 5     | o 1     | o 2 -   | o 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | (?) 2   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | o 4     | t P t P | t u u u | t P t P | t u u u | t P C u | t P C u |         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

The first permutation is marked as Pupuh C. The beginning of the pattern starts by taking the phrases in Pattern A (marked in blue), while beats 2 and 3 are taken from Pattern B, highlighted in yellow. These two phrases are played in alternation for one full *gong* cycle. The next permutation is Pupuh D. This *pupuh* emphasizes phrases from the yellow units of Pupuh B, which are played three times. As the music approaches the next *gong* stroke, marking the end of another *gong* cycle, the green phrase from Pattern A is used to create a different feel and avoid monotony. Another way in which Sukarata develops his patterns are through timbral manipulation. In Pattern E the colored red phrases have the same rhythmic patterns as Pupuh B. Sukarata replaces the P (*plak* sound) with a u (left *cung* sound) to create a different timbre within the pattern. Near the end of the *gong* cycle, he uses the green phrase from Pattern A.

These patterns are usually used during the *metuwek* section when the dancer does not utilize large gestures. As you can see, D (*dag*, strong right-hand stroke) strokes are not present. The *dag* sound is only used to create tension and change the dynamics. If all these patterns were

played at high speed and in a random order, the audience would have difficulty following the music. These are just several of the techniques and ideas Sukarata uses in developing the drumming permutations.

### ***Igel Aksen: Sporadic Accents in Movement***

The next category of the *meguru igel* method in the dancer-drummer relationship is the drum accompaniment for sporadic accents in movements or *igel aksen*. These sporadic, accented movements extend from the *metuwek* and the musical texture of the ensemble is not disrupted: all members continue to play in the ostinato forms and there is no cadential break. The only difference between the two categories is that the drummer plays soft during *metuwek*, but when the dancer decides to make a sporadic movement, the drummer must respond with the proper accented strokes. In my interview with Suryanegara, he states that sporadic movements originate from the dancer's head, hands, and/or feet, so the drummer must keep a close eye on these parts of their body and make the proper drumming response at the right time.

### ***Head Movements***

There are two main head motions that a drummer must know, which are called *kipekan* and *sledet*. *Kipekan* means “to look at with surprise.” This movement starts with *ngagem* in which the dancer fixes on a specific point before suddenly shifting focus in another direction. For example, if the dancer is initially looking at center stage, they would suddenly look toward the left side of the stage. There are four types of *kipekan*: *kipekan kanan*, *kiri*, *menek*, and *tuwun* (*kipekan* to the right, left, up, and down). If the dancer is on *agem kiri* (left *agem*), they are not allowed to do a *kipekan* to the left, and vice versa. Each *kipekan* must be precise to depict the

Jauk Keras' strong character accurately. Sometimes dancers will do double or triple *kipekan* in one *gong* cycle, so the drummer must be attentive and follow these movements precisely.

The second type of head movement is called *sledet*, which is a flicking eye movement. This gesture is one of the most distinct features in Balinese dance. The movement begins with the dancer looking at a central fixed location, tilting the head to either the right or left, and then shifting the eyes to look in the corner of the intended direction. If the dancer is posing an *agem kanan* (right *agem*), they are only allowed to do a *sledet* to the right: this is the opposite procedure of *kipekan*. In the *Jauk Keras* dance, the *sledet* is slightly different because the dancer is wearing a mask; Djimat mentions that even though the audience cannot see the eyes of the dancer, it is still the dancers' responsibility to bring the mask to life. Therefore, the dancer must still conduct the same eye movement behind the mask and breathe life into the movement with their gestures. When finishing the *sledet* moving, the dancer must bring the point of focus back from a corner position to the center in an exaggerated and vigorous manner.



Figure 4.7 I Made Djimat demonstrating the *sledet* movement for *Jauk Keras*

Even though *kipekan* and *sledet* are movements that focus on the head or mask, other body parts are also involved. When the dancer is performing *sledet*, the fingers point toward the same direction as the mask, and when the eyes return to the central focus, the fingers will punctuate the gesture with a pounding motion. In the *kipekan* movement, the body's position will also move toward the intended direction. If the *kipekan* goes to the left, then the body posture will follow.

Both *kipekan* and *sledet* require the dancer to overemphasize the motions so that the resulting gestures convey a *keras* or robust feeling. The primary difference between the two movements is that *kipek* starts at a central focus point and then shifts to another point, whereas *sledet* begins and ends at the same central focus point. Many times, the dancer will begin with a *sledet* and follow with one or two *kipekans*. A *keplak* sound from the drum will accentuate these movements.

### *Hand Movements*

The second type of movement that needs a response from a drummer are those that emerge from the dancer's hands of which there are two types: *nyeriring* and *ngeplak*. The *Jauk Keras* dancer wears a white glove with four-inch fingernails made from cow skin attached to the tips. In the performance, the dancer shakes their hands continuously, which creates a flickering motion of the fingernails called *gegejeran kuku*. This gesture is constant throughout the dance. Occasionally, the dancer flicks their nails slightly more intensely than usual, which is called *nyeriring*; this occurs during a one or two-*gong* cycle. During this motion, the drummer responds with variations of the *keplak* sounds of the drum. The second type of hand movement is *ngeplak*, which means "to hit" or "to clap." The dancer must imagine that there are small insects called

*muring* (fruit flies) surrounding the *Jauk*, thus making them feel annoyed and responding by swatting the flies away. This specific *ngeplak* movement is called *rebut muring* (surrounded by fruit flies). It is also responded to with a *keplak* stroke from the drummer.

### *Foot Movements*

The third type of movement pertains to the dancer's feet and involves three specific movements: *tanjek*, *miles* (pronounced “mee-lus”), and *nengkleng*. *Tanjek* is a standing position where the dancer's body weight is on one foot, while the other is at a 45-degree angle from the body with the toes raised. This movement occurs at the end of an *angsel* (cadential point marked by a simultaneous pause in the dance motion and corresponding music), as well as when a dancer is transitioning to *malpal* (walking fast or marching) or *nayog* (walking slowly). The drummer's response is the *keplak* sound. Occasionally, the dancer does a double movement or *tanjek dua*, hence the drummer will also respond with a double *keplak* sound. The following movement is the *miles*, which starts from a high standing position (*agem duwur*) with one foot already in *nanjek* followed by a rotation of the same foot inwards, thus requiring the dancer to move into a lower stance or *agem beten*. In several instances, the *miles* are also continued by *nengkleng*, in which the foot in a *miles* position is raised no higher than knee level. Both of these movements are also responded to by the drummer's *keplak*.

All of these movements (i.e., *sledet*, *kipekan*, *nyeriring*, *ngeplak*, *tanjek*, *miles*, and *nengkleng*) receive the response of the *keplak* sound on the drum. The basis for such interactions is that the drummer plays *isen-isen* from the *metuwek* patterns, and when the dancer provides one of the aforementioned movements, the drummer spontaneously responds with the *keplak*. It is imperative that a dancer emphasize the movements so that the drummer can understand the

gesture and provide the correct response. If the timing is incorrect, which is referred to as *ngandang*, it becomes difficult for the drummer to respond properly.

The following video illustrates three types of movements: *metuwek*, *kipekan*, and *tanjek*.<sup>57</sup>

Table 4.2 Dancer-drummer relationship for the *metuwek*, *kipekan*, and *tanjek* movements

|    |       |                         |   |   |     |                         |   |   |  |
|----|-------|-------------------------|---|---|-----|-------------------------|---|---|--|
|    | ( 2 ) | 4                       | 5 | 1 | 2 - | 4                       | 5 | 1 |  |
| Da |       | <i>metuwek</i>          |   |   |     | <i>metuwek</i>          |   |   |  |
| Dr |       | <i>metuwek</i> patterns |   |   |     | <i>metuwek</i> patterns |   |   |  |

|    |         |         |         |         |         |             |     |   |
|----|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------|-----|---|
|    | ( 2 )   | 4       | 5       | 1       | 2 -     | 4           | 5   | 1 |
| Da | ■ ■     |         | ■ ■     |         | ■ ■     |             |     |   |
| Dr | . . P . | t P . . | . . P . | t P . . | . . P . | D G D . . . | P . |   |

kipekan
kipekan
tanjek

Da : Dancer  
 ■ ■ : Gives the Cues  
 Dr : Drummer  
 P : accented *keplak*

At the beginning of the video, the dancer performs a *metuwek* stance without any robust movements. During this time, the drummer is paying close attention to the dancer while performing *metuwek* drumming patterns. After several *gong* cycles, the dancer gives the indication for two *kipekans* (head movements) and one *tanjek* (feet movement). The start of the first *kipekan* begins on beat 8, at the same time as the *gong* stroke. The drummer notices this movement and quickly responds to it in the next beat. His response is a sharp, strong *keplak* sound, marked as **P**. On beat 2, the dancer decides to do another *kipekan*; the drummer sees this and responds on beat 3. The last accented movement is the *tanjek*, which starts on beat 4. Due to the longer duration of the *tanjek* than *kipekan*, the drummer responds with a more extended variation in which the accented **P** strokes occur on beat 6. All of the momentum given by the dancer is marked in the green boxes. This video provides clear evidence of how the dancer leads the drummer. Providing cues at other spots will confuse the drummer, preventing them from

<sup>57</sup> The video can be found on the following link [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AK--nFimR\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AK--nFimR_Q)

being able to respond accordingly. Although the drummer provides an accented **P** stroke, the dynamics of the ensemble as a whole do not change: the other musicians continue to play soft.

### **Various *Angsels***

*Metuwek* and sporadic movements do not alter the dynamics and tempo of the entire *gong kebyar* ensemble, but this is not the case with the next category of *angsel*. Various *angsels* are performed, all of them in ways that increase the intensity of the dynamics and the tempo, followed by a cadential break. The *papeson* and *pekaad* sections consist of four different *angsels*, whereas the *pengadeng* section contains another set of four *angsels*.

In dance repertoire, *angsels* are key movements given by the dancer that signal the musicians to *ngangkab*, *ngungkab*, *ngesyabin*, and *nguncab*, all of which involve playing louder—sometimes also faster—leading up to the *angsel's* cadential break.<sup>58</sup> Dancers use *angsels* to move from one standing position (*agem*) to another, from a lower standing position to a higher one, or from one section to the other. These movements do not specifically focus on one aspect of the body such as the head, hands, and feet, but represent the combination of many different motions that creates a more significant gesture. Total body movements take longer to perform than singular ones and affect the dynamics of the music. The idea in *Jauk Keras* is that the dancer creates an *angsel* in a designated spot, which is recognized immediately by the drummer, who in turn provides *angsel* drumming patterns and instructs the other musicians to play louder and, in some instances, to begin increasing the tempo. The musical process is always performed

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<sup>58</sup> Regarding *angsels* in Balinese dance, Sudirana states that “The dancer has the authority to create spontaneous cues, called *angsel*, which have to be answered with particular accents by the drummer. These accents are played in fixed places in its relation to the meter, and are transmitted to the rest of the ensemble who answer with *nguncab* (playing loud from the beginning of the next cycle). This leads to *angsel*, a unison accent later in the cycle” (Sudirana 2009, 19).

in this manner: in a good performance, the *angsel*s are solely dictated by the dancer and not the drummer.

*Angsel in the Papeson and Pekaad Sections*

The *papeson* and *pekaad* sections consist of four different *angsel*s, namely *angsel bawak*, *angsel numpuk*, *angsel kado*, and *angsel lantang*. A dancer's most common *angsel* is *angsel bawak*, which derives from the word *bawak*, meaning “short.” Performing this *angsel* requires two *gong* cycles from the dancers’ cues and the *kendang* pickup and is followed by the cadential break. During my experience as a Balinese music practitioner, I have found that the *angsel bawak* in many dances derives from a single pattern known as *dasar*.

Table 4.3 *Angsel bawak dasar* (basic) pattern

|         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | ⊃ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | (⊃) 2   |
|         | t P     | t P t P | P . P . | D . P . | D . . P | . D . . | . . P . |
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | ⊃ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | (⊃) 2   |
| D . P . | D . t P | t P t P | P . P . | D . . . | . . P . | . . . . | . . . . |

This *dasar* form of the *angsel bawak* is quite simple since not every beat is filled with the drummer’s sixteenth-note stroke. The scarcity of spaces is called *langkah* or *bagal*. If most or all of those spaces are filled, it will be called *kerep*. Sukarata never uses this basic or *dasar* pattern in actual performance, instead developing its basic premise into a more sophisticated rhythm. When I asked him, “Why don’t you play like this?” he replied, “*Nak mara mlajah mara keto dé!* (Only a beginner will play like that, Madé!).” I then asked him to provide an example of how to perform *angsel bawak*. Instead of playing only one example, he demonstrated many of his expanded patterns. Below is a transcription of one of his *angsel bawak* and how it differs from the basic form.

Table 4.4 Juxtaposition of *angsel bawah dasar* and Sukarata's *angsel bawah*

*Angsel Bawah Dasar*

|         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 4       | 5       | 1       | 2 -     | 4       | 5       | 1       | (2) 2   |
|         | t P     | t P t P | P . P . | D . P . | D . . P | . D . . | . . P . |
| 4       | 5       | 1       | 2 -     | 4       | 5       | 1       | (2) 2   |
| D . P . | D . t P | t P t P | P . P . | D . . . | . . P . | . . . . | . . . . |

Sukarata's *Angsel Bawah*

|         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 4       | 5       | 1       | 2 -     | 4       | 5       | 1       | (2) 2   |
|         | t P     | t P t P | P . P . | D G D G | D . t P | . D G D | . D G D |
| 4       | 5       | 1       | 2 -     | 4       | 5       | 1       | (2) 2   |
| P D D G | D . t P | t P t P | P t P . | D . . . | . . P . | . . . . | . . . . |

When juxtaposing the *dasar* form and Sukarata's *angsel bawah*, it becomes clear that there are several similarities between the two. All the similar strokes with their position are in the same yellow or orange color. These similarities imply that the *dasar* form invokes the same feelings that constitute an *angsel bawah*, but what differs is the level of complexity. In Sukarata's pattern, there is less space, or *kerep*, and the use of the left-hand open stroke G (*ge*) is present. The phrases marked in orange are always used to signal that a stop or cadential break is imminent. Regardless of the type of *angsel*, such phrases are always used to inform the ensemble that the cycle will soon stop.

When conducting this *angsel bawah*, the dancer gives a cue on the first beat and the drummer responds on the second beat, which is why this *angsel bawah* pattern begins at the end of the second beat. After hearing the *angsel bawah* drumming patterns, the other musicians respond by playing louder (*nguncab*) on the fourth beat. This cyclic process unfolds quickly, especially when the piece is performed around 170 bpm. It requires full concentration and great reflexes from the drummer.

The second type of *angsel* is called *angsel numpuk*.<sup>59</sup> The word *numpuk* itself means “to stack”; in this case, it refers to conducting a double or sometimes triple *angsel bawah*. After

<sup>59</sup> An example of *angsel numpuk* can be found on the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7N5RPPS07g8>

completing the first *angsel bawak*, the dancer will continue to provide a follow-up cue instead of having a cadential break.

Table 4.5 Dancer-drummer relationship in the *angsel numpuk*

| 1  | 0 4 | ^ 5 | o 1 | o 2 - |  | 0 4 | ^ 5 | o 1 | (o) 2 |
|----|-----|-----|-----|-------|--|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Da |     |     |     |       |  |     |     |     |       |
| Dr |     |     |     |       |  |     |     |     |       |
| 2  | 0 4 | ^ 5 | o 1 | o 2 - |  | 0 4 | ^ 5 | o 1 | (o) 2 |
| Da |     |     |     |       |  |     |     |     |       |
| Dr |     |     |     |       |  |     |     |     |       |
| 3  | 0 4 | ^ 5 | o 1 | o 2 - |  | 0 4 | ^ 5 | o 1 | (o) 2 |
| Da |     |     |     |       |  |     |     |     |       |
| Dr |     |     |     |       |  |     |     |     |       |

The video shows that the dancer starts the first cue on beat one (light green) of the first *gong* cycle, and the drummer responds on the next beat (darker green). At that moment, the drummers assume that the dancer will conduct an *angsel bawak* until proven otherwise. But instead of finishing the phrase as an *angsel bawak*, the dancer then decides to continue with a double *angsel*, giving a signal on the fourth beat of the second *gong* cycle colored in peach. The drummer understands this signal and immediately responds with an *angsel numpuk* pattern shown in brown and then finishes with the orange phrase to indicate a stop.

Less experienced drummers have the option to play the same *angsel bawak* pattern twice, but Sukarata emphasizes that an advanced drummer must have many *angsel* vocabularies; therefore, the rhythmic strokes played between the *angsel bawak* and *angsel numpuk* should never be the same. He encourages drummers to “be creative” and to “let the audience know that you have a lot of money in the bank.” The term “money in the bank” refers to a drummer who has a rich knowledge of patterns and is not worried of “spending” or demonstrating these techniques to the public.

Table 4.6 Sukarata's *ansel numpuk* pattern

Sukarata's *Ansel Numpuk* Pattern

|   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1 | 4       | 5       | 1       | 2 -     | 4       | 5       | 1       | (2) 2   |
|   |         | t P     | t P t P | P . P . | D G D G | D . t P | . D G D | . D G D |
| 2 | 4       | 5       | 1       | 2 -     | 4       | 5       | 1       | (2) 2   |
|   | P D D G | D . t P | t P t P | P t P . | D . t P | t P P d | t P t P | P t P . |
| 3 | 4       | 5       | 1       | 2 -     | 4       | 5       | 1       | (2) 2   |
|   | D G P . | D . t P | t P t P | P t P . | D . . . | . . P . | . . . . | . . . . |

The transcription above shows one version of Sukarata's *ansel numpuk* patterns.

Referring to the dancer-drummer diagram (Table 4.5) above, we know that the drummer picks up the cue and starts playing the *ansel bawak* pattern at the point in the first *gong* cycle marked in green. The drummer then realizes that the *ansel bawak* will not stop, but instead is continued, therefore, he follows with the *ansel numpuk* starting on beat five of the second cycle until it ends on the third *gong* cycle. During the last *gong* cycle, the orange-colored phrase is once again present, signifying the end of the *ansel* sequence or the cadential break. If the orange-colored phrase is not played, the cycle will continue.

The third type of *ansel* is called the *ansel kado* or incomplete *ansel* when compared to the *ansel bawak*.

Table 4.7 *Ansel kado* diagram

|    |   |         |         |           |               |         |   |
|----|---|---------|---------|-----------|---------------|---------|---|
|    | 4 | 5       | 1       | 2 -       | 4             | 5       | 1 |
| Da |   |         |         |           |               |         |   |
| Dr |   | . . t P | t P t P | P P t P . | D . . . . P . | . . . . |   |

If the *ansel bawak* takes two *gong* cycles to perform, the *ansel kado* will only take half of the duration. The dancer signals the cue on beat one (marked green) and the drummer responds on beat two and ends on the same cycle. The pattern for *ansel kado* (highlighted in orange) itself originates from the closing phrase of the *ansel bawak*. Therefore, *ansel kado* is incomplete because it takes only a portion of the complete *ansel bawak* pattern.

The fourth type of *angsel* is called *angsel lantang*, which means long *angsel*. Unlike the other three types, the *angsel lantang* does not have a specific duration, but it is always the longest. The dancer starts with an *angsel bawak* and directly moves into the *angsel lantang*. Therefore, the drummer also begins on an *angsel bawak*, but as the end of the sequence approaches, the pattern changes to the *angsel lantang*. In addition to providing strong drum strokes, a drummer must also give commands with his body, especially when indicating such an important event like the *angsel lantang*. In the following video, notice how the drummer looks at the musicians and gives them a slight nod before beginning the *angsel lantang*.<sup>60</sup> Bodily gestures are essential in drumming: a subtle nod gives the other musicians a sense of security and certainty by ensuring that all ensemble members are prepared for fast-approaching and significant changes in the music such as the *angsel lantang*.

Table 4.8 *Angsel lantang* diagram

| 1  | 0 4                     | ^ 5 | o 1 | o 2 - |  | 0 4                     | ^ 5 | o 1 | (o) 2 |
|----|-------------------------|-----|-----|-------|--|-------------------------|-----|-----|-------|
| Da | <i>metuwek</i>          |     |     |       |  | <i>metuwek</i>          |     |     |       |
| Dr | <i>metuwek</i> patterns |     |     |       |  | <i>metuwek</i> patterns |     |     |       |
| 2  | 0 4                     | ^ 5 | o 1 | o 2 - |  | 0 4                     | ^ 5 | o 1 | (o) 2 |
| Da |                         |     |     |       |  |                         |     |     |       |
| Dr |                         |     |     |       |  |                         |     |     |       |
| 3  | 0 4                     | ^ 5 | o 1 | o 2 - |  | 0 4                     | ^ 5 | o 1 | (o) 2 |
| Da |                         |     |     |       |  |                         |     |     |       |
| Dr |                         |     |     |       |  |                         |     |     |       |

Table 4.8 describes the event that occurs between the dancer and drummer in the first three *gong* cycles. In the first *gong* cycle, the dancer focuses on *metuwek*, while the drummer plays softly using *metuwek* patterns. Once the second *gong* cycle begins, the dancer starts the preparation of *angsel lantang* on beat three, as shown in the light green color; this cue is

<sup>60</sup> An example of *angsel lantang* can be found on the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsJcY-Z5e1k>

understood by the drummer whose response begins on beat 5, which is highlighted in dark green. The signal for *angsel lantang* itself starts on beat one in the third *gong* cycle, marked in yellow, and the drummer starts the patterns for *angsel lantang* at the end of the second beat on the third *gong* cycle, marked in red. During the *metuwek* and until this moment of preparation, the tempo is 170 bpm, but once the *angsel lantang* has begun, there is a sudden acceleration to 185 bpm.

When performing the *angsel lantang*, Sukarata uses a lot of *dags* (D) open-hand strokes that he calls *ngulah*. The word *ngulah* literally means “to scare away an animal” such as birds: it is loud, fast, and intense. To support this concept, the pattern in this sequence is filled with right-hand open strokes to create tension. Sukarata’s *angsel lantang* style is notated in the following example.

Table 4.9 *Angsel lantang* drumming patterns

Sukarata’s *Angsel Lantang* Pattern

|         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | ⊃ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | (?) 2   |
|         | t P     | t P t P | P . P . | D G D G | D . t P | . D G D | . D G D |
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | ⊃ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | (?) 2   |
| P D D G | D . t P | t P t P | P t P . | D G D . | . t P t | P t P . | D G P t |
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | ⊃ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | (?) 2   |
| P . D G | P . D G | P . D G | P t P   | D . t P | t P P D | P D t P | . t P D |
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | ⊃ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | (?) 2   |
| t P . t | P D t P | . D . t | P t P   | D G D . | . t P t | P t P t | P D . D |
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | ⊃ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | (?) 2   |
| . t P C | . D . D | . t P C | . t P C | . D . t | P C . D | . t P C | . t P C |
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | ⊃ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | (?) 2   |
| . D . t | P C . D | . t P C | . D P C | . D P C | . D P C | . D P C | . D P . |
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | ⊃ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | (?) 2   |
| D P . D | . D . D | . P t P | P t P   | D G D G | D . t P | . D G D | . D G D |
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | ⊃ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | ○ 1     | (?) 2   |
| P D D G | D . t P | D . t   | P t P   | D G D   | . P .   | . . . . | . . . . |

As seen in this diagram, the *angsel lantang* starts with an *angsel bawak* pattern, marked in green. Once the drummer hears and interprets the dancers’ cue for the *angsel lantang*, he starts at the end of the second beat, marked in red. This is an example of Sukarata’s *ngulah* phrasing approach. It is evident that there are many *dag* strokes spread throughout the cycles. When the sequence reaches the end of the *angsel lantang* cycle, the drummer’s *angsel bawak* pattern is played, followed by the closing phrase. An *angsel lantang* is performed twice in the *papeson*

section: the first iteration signifies *ngalih pajeng*, while the second informs the group to move to the *pengadeng* section.<sup>61</sup> In the *pekaad* part, *angsel lantang* is only performed once and the dancer faces toward the back of the stage. During this section, the *angsel lantang* signifies that the dance will soon come to a stop, which is called *angsel lantang penyuwud* (“to stop”).

### Angsels in the Pengadeng Section

Now that the four different *angsels* in the *papeson* and *pekaad* sections have been described, I will discuss the four different types of *angsels* used in the *pengadeng* section. The four types are called *angsel a gong*, *angsel ngalih kemong*, *angsel ngalih gong*, and *angsel penelah*. It is important to note that in this transcription, the rhythmic values of each drum stroke in the *pengadeng* are half the length of those in the *papeson*. In other words, if each drum stroke in the *papeson* equals a sixteenth note, the *pengadeng* is understood to be a thirty-second note.

The first type of *angsel* in this category, *angsel a gong*, refers to an *angsel* that occurs for one *gong*. When performing this *angsel*, the dancer starts their cue exactly with the *gong*. Because this section is played at a slow tempo, the drummer responds on the same beat but slightly after the dancer provides the cue. One example of Sukarata’s *angsel a gong* pattern is as follows:

Table 4.10 *Angsel a gong* in the *pengadeng* section

|                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|-----------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|-------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|-----------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| ( ) 2           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| . . . P t P P P |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 4               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 5               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| t P . D . P t P |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | P t P . D G D G |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | D . t P . D G D   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | . P t P P D D G |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 3               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 4                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | -               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| D . . P t P t P |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | P t P D D G D . |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | . t P d t P t P   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | P . D D P . D . |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 4               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | o                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 5               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| . t P d t P t P |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | P d C U t P t P |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | P D G D t P t P   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | P t P d C U P . |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 3                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | ( ) 2           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| D . C U P . D . |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | C U P . D G D . |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | P . . . . . . . . |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

<sup>61</sup> The term *ngalih pajeng* is translated as “looking for the umbrella.” Usually on Balinese stages, there are decorated umbrellas that are placed on both sides of the stage. The dancer will use the umbrella as a prop and dance around it. Although sometimes it is not present, the choreography still requires this type of movement to be depicted.

The phrases highlighted in blue are vital because it is one way of how Sukarata *ngangkat gending* or raises the piece, which means he emphasizes the pattern in such a way as to instruct the other musicians to play louder. Since the phrase starts on the *gong*, the other musicians will hear the pattern and in turn play louder on the following beat.

This phrase can also be used in the second and third kinds of *angsel*s, which are *angsel ngalih kemong* and *angsel ngalih gong*. These two *angsel*s are similar in terms of duration but differ in terms of their starting and finishing points in relation to the *gong* cycle. The word *ngalih* means to look for or in this case finishes at a certain point. Hence, *angsel ngalih kemong* starts after the *gong* and looks to finish on *kemong*, while *angsel ngalih gong* starts after *kemong* and finishes on the *gong*.<sup>62</sup> The same drumming patterns can be used in both instances.

Table 4.11 *Angsel ngalih kemong*

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 |   |   |   | 4 |   |   |   | 1 |   |   |   | 5 |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| t | P | . | D | P | t | P | . | P | t | P | P | P | P | P | P |

The dancer gives their cue on the fourth beat and the drummer responds on the same beat but slightly later. The gamelan members will *nguncab*, or play louder, beginning on the fifth beat. This cycle has a cadential break before the *kemong*, which is on beat 8.

The last type of *angsel* in the *pengadeng* section is called *angsel penelah*. It functions as a transition from the *pengadeng* to the *pekaad* section. The dancer usually provides a more significant gesture for this signal. In turn, the drummer responds with an *angsel penelah*. This part starts with an *angsel a gong* pattern, but after *kemong*, the drummer pushes the tempo and

<sup>62</sup> The example of *angsel ngalih kemong* can be found on the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWZkFMroORs>

shortens the rhythmic value of the strokes from thirty-second notes to sixteenth notes to increase the momentum.<sup>63</sup>

Table 4.12 *Angsel penelah*

|         |           |     |           |     |           |   |           |   |     |
|---------|-----------|-----|-----------|-----|-----------|---|-----------|---|-----|
| ( ? ) 2 |           |     |           |     |           |   |           |   |     |
| . . . . | P         | t   | P         | P   | P         |   |           |   |     |
| ? 2     |           |     |           |     |           |   |           |   |     |
| t       | P         | . . | D         | . . | P         | t | P         |   |     |
| ^ 5     |           |     |           |     |           |   |           |   |     |
| D       | . . .     | P   | t         | P   | t         | P |           |   |     |
| ? 2     |           |     |           |     |           |   |           |   |     |
| P       | . .       | D   | . .       | D   | . .       | D |           |   |     |
| ^ 5     |           |     |           |     |           |   |           |   |     |
| D       | . . . . . | P   | . . . . . |     |           |   |           |   |     |
| ? 4     |           |     |           |     | o 1       |   |           |   |     |
| P       | t         | P   | . .       | D   | G         | D | G         |   |     |
| ? 3     |           |     |           |     | o 1       |   |           |   |     |
| P       | t         | P   | D         | D   | G         | D | . .       |   |     |
| ? 4     |           |     |           |     | o 1       |   |           |   |     |
| t       | . .       | P   | . . . . . | D   | . .       | P | . .       | P | . . |
| o 1     |           |     |           |     | ? 3       |   |           |   |     |
| D       | . . . . . | P   | . . . . . | D   | . . . . . | P | . . . . . |   |     |
| ^ 5     |           |     |           |     |           |   |           |   |     |
| ( ? ) 2 |           |     |           |     |           |   |           |   |     |

The sequence starts with a *ngangkat* phrase marked in blue, which signals an impending *angsel*. While watching the dancer, the drummer realizes that the piece will soon progress to the *pekaad* section and thus proceeds with the *angsel penelah*. Two tempo changes occur in this sequence: the tempo begins at 55 bpm and gradually increases to 95 bpm by the beginning of the yellow highlighted section. Once this new tempo is set, the drummer starts to play sixteenth notes to speed up the tempo until it reaches 170 bpm, as seen in the green highlighted area.

### **Malpal and Milpil**

The last category in the *meguru igel* concept is *malpal* and *milpil*. These movements do not belong to any of the aforementioned categories. The dynamics become louder when they are performed, the dance and accompanying music lasts for several *gong* cycles, and there is no cadential break. Both movements emphasize walking or marching motions. *Malpal* is performed during the *papeson* and *pekaad* sections and is a type of fast, walking dance performed in a circular motion with the dancer's foot marching in time with the beat. It is usually performed before the *angsel lantang* and connects from one side of *ngalih pajeng* to the other. When the

<sup>63</sup> The *angsel penelah* example can be seen on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64uQ5UUWAKE>

dancer is performing *malpal*, the music is played louder. From a drummers' perspective, *malpal* consists of two sections: an anticipatory pattern that cues the other musicians to intensify the volume and the *malpal* pattern itself. The anticipatory part can derive from an *angsel* or from a slower walking movement called *nayog*. The duration of *malpal* is never precise, but generally lasts between three and five *gong* cycles; the dancer decides exactly how many *gong* cycles they need in order to move from one spot to another depending on the size of the stage. The following example starts from an *angsel awak* followed by the *malpal*.<sup>64</sup>

Table 4.13 *Malpal* patterns

|         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | ∩ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | (∩) 2   |
|         |         | t P     | P . P . | D G D G | D . t P | . D G D | . D G D |
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | ∩ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | (∩) 2   |
| P D D G | D . t P | t P t P | P t P . | D . P t | P t P t | P t P d | t P t P |
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | ∩ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | (∩) 2   |
| P d t P | t P P d | t P t P | P d t P | t P P d | t P t P | t P t P | t P P d |
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | ∩ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | (∩) 2   |
| P d t P | t P P d | P d t P | t P P d | t P t P | P d t P | t C . C | t P t P |
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | ∩ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | (∩) 2   |
| P d t E | t P t P | P d t E | t P t P | P d t E | t P t p | t C G C | t P t P |
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | ∩ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | (∩) 2   |
| P d t E | t E t P | P C G C | t P t C | G C t P | t C G C | t C G C | t P t P |
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | ∩ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | (∩) 2   |
| P d t E | t E t P | t C G C | C G G C | C G C G | C G C G | G C G C | t P t P |
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | ∩ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | (∩) 2   |
| t P t P | C u t P | t P C u | t P t P | t P t P | C u t P | t P C u | t P t P |
| ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | ∩ 2 -   | ♩ 4     | ^ 5     | o 1     | (∩) 2   |
| t P t P | C u t P | t P C u | t P t P | C u t P | t P C u | t P C u |         |

The *malpal* in this example starts with an *angsel awak* followed by a transition marked in blue. This short phrase, which anticipates the change to *malpal*, is a vital cue for the musicians. According to Sukarata, a drummer should approach the *malpal* as an opportunity to highlight the best of their various vocabularies; more specifically, he encourages drummers to “*ngedengang kebisane*” (“showcase their abilities”) in this section. His patterns, which are inspired by Nang Otret, emphasize the left-hand strokes *ge* (G) and *peng* (E), marked in purple.

<sup>64</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yunYA-mqSq8> for an example of *malpal*.

Each of the patterns can be rearranged in different orders in order to create a variety of permutations.

Whereas *malpal* occurs in the *papeson* and *pekaad* sections, *milpil* is conducted only in the *pengadeng* part. According to Suryanegara, *milpil* is a set of movement sequences during which the dancers' feet move very fast, known as *nyingklak*, combined with a more pronounced hand movement. The following example outlines the *milpil* pattern.<sup>65</sup>

Table 4.14 *Milpil* patterns for the *pengadeng* section

|   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |       |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|-------|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| ↻ 2   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |       |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| .   t   P   t   P   t   P   t   P   t   P   d   C   P   t   P |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |       | ↻ 4   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| P   d   t   P   t   P   P   d   C   .   C   U   t   P   C   U |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |       | t   P   t   P   P   d   C   U   t   P   t   P   P   d   C   U |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ↻ 1   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | ^ 5   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| t   P   t   P   P   d   C   U   t   P   C   U   t   P   C   U |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |       | t   P   P   d   P   d   t   P   t   P   P   d   P   d   t   P |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ^ 5   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | ↻ 3   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| t   P   P   d   t   P   t   P   P   d   t   P   t   P   t   P |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |       | t   P   t   P   P   d   t   P   t   P   P   d   t   P   t   P |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ↻ 4   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | ↻ - 2 |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| P   d   t   P   t   P   P   d   t   P   t   P   t   C   .   C |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |       | .   .   t   E   t   P   t   P   P   d   t   P   .   C   G   C |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ↻ 2   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | ↻ 4   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| .   .   t   E   t   P   t   P   P   d   t   P   t   C   G   C |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |       | .   t   P   C   G   C     t   P   C   G   C   .   C   G   C   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ↻ 1   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | ^ 5   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| .   t   P   C   G   C   .   t   P   C   G   C   .   C   G   C |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |       | p   t   P   P   d   t   P   t   P   t   P   t   P   t   P     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ^ 5   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | ↻ 1   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| t   P   t   P   P   d   t   P   t   P   t   P   t   P   t   P |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |       | t   P   P   d   C   U   P   .   D   .   C   U   P   .   D   . |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ↻ 3   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | (↻) 2 |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| C   U   P   .   D   G   D   .   .   .   P   .   .   .   .   . |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |       |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

The drummer must respond to *milpil* with a pattern in double time and will slightly decrease the tempo to indicate a significant difference in the feel of the music. As evident in the transcription, the drumming patterns used in *milpil* are highly complex. Sukarata states that the challenge of this technique is in the *mat*, or “beat,” because the drummer must play double time while remaining vigilant and attentive to the idiosyncrasies of the dance. *Milpil* is only performed once for a duration of one *gong* cycle in the *pengadeng* section.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> An example of *milpil* can be found on the following link [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4d\\_ky\\_-Zf20](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4d_ky_-Zf20)

<sup>66</sup> For a full performance of the *Jauk Keras* dance can be seen in the following link [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzK\\_dNK-Awk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzK_dNK-Awk)

## Conclusion

One time while I was teaching a foreign student, they asked, “How do you know what/how to respond?” I could not provide a solid answer: for me, Balinese drumming is a very organic and innate art form. When I raised the same question to Sukarata, his response was simple: “*Tolih igele de, to ne dadi guru*” (Look at the dancer, Madé, that is your guidance). The brevity of his response encouraged me to begin formulating the framework for defining his *meguru igel* concept.

The various types of diagrams and transcriptions I have used are intended to highlight the various processes of how the dancer (*igel*) leads and becomes the guide (*guru*) for the drummer as understood through the four different categories of movements in the *Jauk Keras* dance. Although this chapter focused solely on the *Jauk Keras* dance, the idiosyncrasies of the dancer-drummer relationship are also applicable to similar improvisatory dances in Balinese performing arts.

For drummers in Bali, the terms, choreographies, and drumming techniques I have outlined in this chapter form a corpus of fundamental knowledge for accompanying Balinese dance, one that is so ingrained in the performance practice that it operates at a largely instinctual level rather than being theorized in explicit terms. A goal of my research has been to bring this “instinct”-based understanding into the realm of a music-theoretical discourse, which has been challenging, as I too have spent most of my life drumming in these ways on the basis of “instinct.”

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

In 2004, during the early years of my studies with Sukarata, I would often travel with him, riding on the back of his Sanex motorcycle.<sup>67</sup> We would eat by the beach, visit his friends, go to malls, or perhaps talk Bali politics, and occasionally I would even take him to try pizza or burgers. We have such fond memories of those moments. Those were the times, more often than not, when I would hear the more philosophical aspect of his drumming. Typically, he would begin to speak in response to hearing a recording of some Balinese gamelan in a restaurant. Sometimes he would begin reliving nostalgic days with his drumming partners. During those times the values of drumming he considered important were continuously repeated to me. One standout message he had for me was, “*Yen mekendang, pang nyak megending gedige*” (When you are playing the drums, you have to make it sing). As a beginner, I struggled to understand this. How could a drum, a rhythmic instrument, sing? When I followed up on what he meant, he only answered, “One day you will figure it out.” Confused, I stopped asking in the hope that one day I would understand. Almost two decades later, I think I do, at least in large measure, and that question and my provisional understanding of its answer represent the key findings of this dissertation, which I hope does some justice to serving as a formulation of Sukarata’s thinking on such matters in scholarly form.

This dissertation has investigated the importance of improvisation in Balinese drumming generally, doing so on the basis of a case study of one particular drummer, I Ketut Sukarata. The

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<sup>67</sup> Sukarata always had a passion for Harley Davidson motorcycles, but could not afford one. So, he got a Sanex model, which is a cheaper imitation of the Harley Davidson choppers.

purpose of this research is to challenge the existing literature, which has either ignored or de-emphasized the significance of improvisatory practices in Balinese gamelan. While a few scholars, as noted, have discussed aspects of improvisation in Balinese musical practice (see Bakan 1999; Tenzer 2000a; M. M. Hood 2001; Sudirana 2009; Tilley 2019; Schatz 2020; Pryatna 2020), my aim has been to provide deeper understandings and new perspectives for the consideration of this fundamentally important dimension of Balinese drumming—and by extension musicking, dancing, and living—artistry.

Towards this end, my research has built upon and drawn inspiration from scholarship on improvisation in other cultures beyond Bali/Indonesia, especially relative to particular African, and African American (especially jazz) musicultural traditions. Such cross-cultural perspectives have been essential, for as Tenzer has suggested, “analysis is a path to musical awareness and better musicianship. Our purpose is to make the diverse systems of musical thought under consideration available for creative musicians looking for an informed basis on which to know, assimilate, model, or borrow from world musics” (Tenzer 2006b, 5). Through this project, I have endeavored to lay out the foundations for a new, systematic way of investigating Balinese music in relation to an approach to music-theoretical analysis that is akin to that applied to the study of Western music in the field of music theory.

### **Three Improvisatory Processes**

This research has identified three concepts that stem from Sukarata’s tripartite method of improvisatory processes: *kutang-duduk*, *meguru gending*, and *meguru igel*. In Chapter 2, I discussed Sukarata’s first concept, called *kutang-duduk*, which pertains to the improvisatory practices and interactions in paired hand drumming. In previous literature, there has been an

implicit assumption that improvisation does not occur in paired hand drumming in the *gong kebyar* ensemble, or at least that the role of improvisation is minimal. Through my analysis using Sukarata's *kutang-duduk* method, which emphasizes the interactions between two drummers in the act of *kutang* ("give," leaving out strokes) and *duduk* ("take", replacing them with other strokes or syncopating), I have shown that this is a misconception. Inspired by Tilley's concept of collective improvisation (see Tilley 2019), I showed how drummers at the highest level, such as Sukarata, improvise in two specific styles, called *kendang nutug* and *kendang batu-batu*. My analysis focused on the *pengipuk* section of the *Oleg Tamulilingan* dance and the *kendang batu-batu* section of the *Truna Jaya* dance.

Sukarata shows us that the *wadon* drummer, who has the primary responsibility as the overall leader of the ensemble, must keep their patterns more straightforward. However, the *lanang* must have the ability to play *lamis*, or talkative. A skilled *lanang* player can move around the *wadon* by anticipating, delaying, syncopating, or alternating their patterns to create a much richer, less predictable, and more exciting and dynamic drumming texture.

In Sudirana's concluding chapter of his master's thesis, he raises three questions: "(1) How does one develop patterns that are perfectly synchronized with melody according to an accepted Balinese aesthetic? (2) How can one construct patterns that clearly underline the dance movements? and (3) What is the philosophy behind the drumming?" (Sudirana 2009, 63). Chapter 3 of this dissertation, in which I discussed Sukarata's *meguru gending* concept, addressed the first of these questions. This concept emphasizes the drummer's understanding of the melodic and colotomic structure of a piece (*gending*), and how drummers use that knowledge as guidance (*guru*).

In the *meguru gending* concept, after a drummer has mastered his technical skills, they must understand the construction of a piece. First, they must be able to identify the important colotomic markers, such as the *kajar*, *gong*, *kempur*, and *kemong*. Second, they must know which of these markers has significance for drumming and for controlling the piece, because other than the *gong* they all sound multiple times in the cycle. And lastly, after understanding the important markers, they must learn many patterns and be creative in developing them (*kekembangan*). The analysis in this chapter focused on the *pengipuk* section of the *Truna Jaya* dance. That analysis showed a variety of possible *gong*, *kempur*, *kemong*, and *isen-isen* phrases.

Traditionally, in the solo *kendang tunggal* style, only the *wadon* drummer would perform, leaving the *lanang* drummer waiting. Sukarata, on the other hand, wanted to show that both drummers are capable. Only a drummer with Sukarata's prestige could have made a change like this, to see it quickly become widespread practice. Therefore, in my recording and analysis, both drummers take turns playing the *pengipuk* section of *Truna Jaya*. Correct implementation of Sukarata's *meguru gending* allow two individual drummers to perform their patterns and fit accordingly to an accepted Balinese aesthetics.

Chapter 4 addressed Sudirana's second question, regarding drumming to accompany a dance. As a case study, I analyzed the *Jauk Keras* dance, a solo improvisatory dance accompanied in the *kendang tunggal* or solo drumming style. The dance pieces analyzed in the earlier chapters had a more fixed choreography, but the *Jauk Keras* dance is improvisatory, so understanding how to accompany the dance is more challenging. Sukarata's third method, called *meguru igel*, is a framework that teaches the drummer to respond to dances such as *Jauk Keras*. The term literally means the dance (*igel*) becomes the guide (*guru*) for the drummers to respond and anticipate a non-fixed choreography. The dancer leads and provides the cues, while the

drummer must respond correctly to those cues and transfer them to the rest of the musicians in the gamelan.

Similarly to the other two concepts, *meguru igel*'s primary requirement is that a drummer knows the structure of the performance and the colotomic structure of the piece. The next step in drumming for dance accompaniment is identifying how to respond to any given dance movement. There are four dance principles in the *meguru igel* concept: *metuwek* (held stance), *igel aksen* (sporadic accents in movement), various *angsels* (accent at cadence points), and *malpal* and *milpil* (form of marching). The practice of accompanying dance is not new in Bali, but this research formulates an instinct-based knowledge into a music-theoretical discourse that a broader audience can understand.

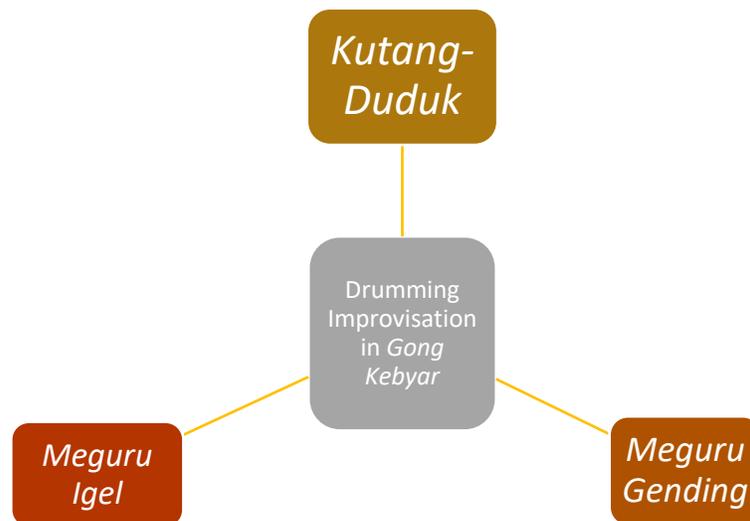


Figure 5.1 Sukarata's tripartite concept of drumming improvisation in *gong kebyar*

In essence, Sukarata's three concepts emerge from the core idea that the drummer must make the rhythmic patterns seem to "sing" by aligning them correctly with the piece, and "dance" by correctly interpreting, anticipating, and interacting with the dance (and the dancer). A corollary idea is the reciprocal relationship, either between drummers, or between the dancer and

drummer. The findings from this project demonstrate that improvisation is a fundamental component of Balinese drumming, key to making this core idea a reality.

In addressing Sudirana's last question, I provide my interpretation of the underlying philosophy of drumming improvisation in Balinese culture. If we believe that musical forms and structures are, in some sense, a representation of the cultural values of the people who make and experience the music, then the ways individuals act and react in drumming reflects, embodies, and informs a set of values in Balinese social life and culture. Each participant performs their role within a structured mode of interaction, yet there is still room for the individuals to find their own voice, playfulness, and give and take with others. There is structure, but also space for flexibility, room to improvise.

Drumming improvisation builds upon interaction and trust. Drumming partners can only feel secure if they know that the other will fill their voids and be in balance with them. For dance accompaniment, the drummer must understand the important dance movements, providing gestures or commands for the musicians to lead the ensemble. Great interactions require great trust. The idea of trust has been profoundly examined by Bakan in his research on *beleganjur* music, in particular through his reflections of drumming with Sukarata in the intricate two-drum *beleganjur* style. Bakan states,

...I have come to believe after much thought and reflection that for Sukarata, meaning and value in drumming are located not so much in the playing of music itself as in the precious achievement of a trusting partnership realized and represented in that playing.... To drum in the absence of one's partner, or, just as importantly, in the absence of an abiding *faith* in one's partner, is not to drum at all.... Good drumming is premised on trust, and is in a very important sense *about* trust. Trust is both the cause and product of the technical precision of execution highlighted in verbal descriptions of drumming excellence. (Bakan 1999, 328–39).

Drumming, either with a partnering drummer or dancer, cannot be understood by looking at a sole individual. Every element is interwoven, interlocked, to create an aesthetic based on togetherness and sense of community. The quality of trust and interaction are like threads in a cloth. “Alone, each is lifeless, meaningless, a directionless strand of material. But as the different strands are woven together in a balanced and integrated way, each gains significance and purpose as a unique but ultimately indistinguishable part of something greater...where it can finally be recognized not for what it was alone but for the whole of which it has become an integral part” (Bakan 1999, 329–30).

Interactions and trust create balance in performance, a reflection of what the Balinese people work to achieve in life. One might have a bigger responsibility, but it does not dismiss the position and importance of the other. Each aspect of drumming, each aspect of life must be in equilibrium to achieve *adung*, a synchronous relationship between multiple entities.

### **Final Thoughts**

*Diapin pak lacur, tapi pak sing taen demit ajak ilmu. Harus bares, orin anak ane metakon* (Even though you may be poor, never be stingy with knowledge. Be generous, tell the people that are asking).

-I Ketut Sukarata

I have always thought of Sukarata as my second father. He has taken care of me, ‘groomed’ me, and shaped me into the musician I am today. My entire approach to drumming, and specifically regarding improvisation, is inspired by his work. He often tells me, “*Dé, murid ane melenan, sing je mlajah mekendang gen, tapi liu metakon. Yen nyidang pak nyawab, kel orin. Masih sing kel aba mati.*” (Madé, you are a different kind of student, you not only study drumming but you also ask many questions. If I know the answers, I will tell you. I will not bring my knowledge to the grave). I am humbled by these words. This renowned maestro of drumming

is exceptionally generous with his knowledge. It is only right that I continue his legacy by spreading his knowledge.

Today, Sukarata is not as strong as he once was. His health has declined drastically and he cannot even play *kendang* anymore. I therefore admire all the more his dedication to teaching about drumming, especially in supporting me to succeed in this dissertation. He says to me, “*Pak sing nu nyidang nyemak kendang, tapi bibih kel anggon ngajin.*” (I can’t play the drum anymore, but I will use my mouth to teach you).<sup>68</sup> Drumming is the only topic that brings a smile to his face these days.

With this dissertation, I have organized Sukarata’s thoughts on improvisational drumming and laid the groundwork for a more robust field of music-theoretical studies in Balinese gamelan music. Moving forward, both in my future work and that of others, I hope this research becomes an inspiration and model for analyzing Balinese music, as well as possibly other kinds of music too. Other fruitful avenues for research could include investigating other drummers’ styles, a comparative study among drummers, or further investigation of how dancers and drummers interact. I encourage more Balinese scholars to engage in shaping the field of music theory. I maintain that the number of publications in this field remains far behind the rate of new composition. I appeal again to the idea of balance, that no one entity is higher than the other.

On a concluding note, I hope that this research can be beneficial in theoretical and pragmatic ways for both English readers and Balinese practitioners. I have attempted to organize the dissertation in a manner and using a structure that allows for its analyses and interpretations

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<sup>68</sup> “Mouth” in this sentence refers to Sukarata’s way of teaching me by either singing the drum patterns or criticizing my drumming.

to be understood and used by readers from different backgrounds. Hopefully, this work can facilitate better understandings of Balinese drumming improvisation and the many musical and extramusical concepts and topics to which it relates and leads. For practitioners, the transcriptions and videos included in the dissertation can be used for study, and to continue the legacy of Sukarata's drumming. This dissertation is of course written in English, the primary language used in academia both in the United States and internationally. It thereby has the capacity to reach a broad audience throughout the world. But English publications are often difficult to access for the Balinese, the main practitioners of the musical culture at the heart of this work. Therefore, my future goal for this dissertation is to develop it into a dual-language book in both English and Indonesian. Then the findings of this dissertation will finally be returned to the readers to whom it is, perhaps, most relevant.

*- Gong -*

## APPENDIX A

### IRB DETERMINATION MEMO

p 1 of 1

FLORIDA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

OFFICE *of the* VICE PRESIDENT *for* RESEARCH



To: I Gde Made Indra Sadguna  
College of Music

From: Office for Human Subjects Protection

Date: November 13, 2019

Study Title: Investigating I Ketut Sukarata's Kendang Tunggal Virtuosity

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The Office for Human Subjects Protection at Florida State University has received your application for the above-referenced project.

It has been determined that your project does not constitute "human subjects research" as defined by DHHS and/or FDA regulations, and thus does not require IRB review or approval.

Note that this determination applies only to the activities submitted as part of application, and does not apply should any changes be made to your project. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities are research involving human subjects, please submit a new request to the Office of Human Subjects for a determination.

Please retain a copy of this memo for your records.

Thank you.

Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects Office  
humansubjects@fsu.edu/850-644-7900

## APPENDIX B

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN RECORDING

The following list is the names of participants involved in the recording during my fieldwork on July 5, 2021, taking place at Studio Gamelan Cendana, owned by I Ketut Suanda. The recorded music was under the direction of I Ketut Sukarata.

1. I Gede Juliartha Putra, *ceng-ceng*
2. I Made Aditya Putra, *kajar*
3. Ni Komang Wulandari, *gangsa polos*
4. Ni Ketut Fenty Lestari, *kantilan polos*
5. I Ketut Adi Wirahasa, *jublag*
6. Agus Dody Aryawan, *jublag*
7. I Wayan Suarjaya, *gong*
8. Deo Sandiawan, *gangsa sangsih*
9. I Gusti Agung Putu Retno Saputra, *kantilan sangsih*
10. I Gede Putu Satya Iswara, *jegogan*
11. I Putu Gede Suputra, *jegogan*
12. I Nyoman Adi Swarna, *kendang Jauk Keras, kendang lanang*
13. I Made Dwi Andika Putra, *kendang wadon*
14. Made Ayu Desiari, *Truna Jaya* dancer
15. I Wayan Gede Bimantara, *Jauk Keras* dancer

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

I Gde Made Indra Sadguna was born in Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia. He was raised in a family of Balinese traditional artists. He is a lecturer at the Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI) in Denpasar, specializing in Balinese gamelan. As a musician, he has performed in many countries, including Australia, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, India, Malaysia, Canada, Cambodia, and the United States. He has also been invited as artist in residence at the University of Western Australia (UWA), Wake Forest University, Swarthmore College, Lawrence University, Philadelphia Folklore Project, and the Chicago Balinese Gamelan.

While at Florida State University, he directed the Sekaa Gong Hanuman Agung Balinese Gamelan and participated in Mas N Steel, the university's steelpan ensemble. Sadguna has presented his scholarly work at numerous seminars and conferences in Indonesia and the United States, as well as in other international locations.