

Songs, Singers, and Gamelan



Listen to almost any commercial recording of gamelan made in Java and you will notice that the female singers' voices are prominent. Inspect the cover of the cassette or CD and you will find that the only performers named there, besides the group leader, are likely to be the female singers. Their photos may grace the cover, too. At several points in the recording, a male chorus is likely to be heard alongside the female soloist, and one or two pieces might even feature a solo male voice, but women's voices can be heard far more frequently. In live performances, too, the singers may be amplified while the instruments are not. Obviously this was not always the case. The advent of electricity changed many things in Java as elsewhere in the world.

Over the course of the twentieth century, the growing prominence of the singers due to amplification went hand in hand with an increase in the number of vocal-centered compositions that had begun in the late nineteenth century. The influence of popular song styles imported to or created in Indonesia has certainly played a part in this development. Yet despite these factors favoring vocal prominence, in many of the gamelan pieces performed to this day, the vocal parts are not considered to be any more important than the various instrumental strands with which they entwine.

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF SINGING

The traditional term for women who sing with gamelan is *pesindhèn*; their singing is called *sindhènan*. While many (including some of the singers themselves) still use the term, other words have been introduced because *pesindhèn* acquired negative connotations of licentiousness—singers stay out all night, traveling with a group of male musicians. Essentially euphemisms, these alternate appellations include *waranggana*, a literary term meaning "heavenly nymph," and *swarawati*, meaning "voice of feminine beauty." This renaming was part of a broader move

in the middle of the twentieth century. As the new Republic of Indonesia established performing arts conservatories and then university-level academies, the new teaching staff sought to gain legitimacy and elevate the social status of gamelan music by renaming not only the *pesindhèn* but instrumentalists and male singers as well. Instead of *niyaga*, an instrumentalist was to be called *pangrawit*, maker of beautiful things, and male singers were dubbed *wiraswara* (heroic voice) rather than *penggérong*. Of these new names, only *pangrawit* had already existed in the language as a component in the names of certain court musicians such as my teacher Martopangrawit (see Sumarsam 1995: 124).

The questionable reputation of female singers was linked to the itinerant female performers who traveled around Java during Dutch colonial times, with a small gamelan that played for whoever would pay. Male “customers” would take turns dancing with the woman who also sang. Similar practices have been widespread in other parts of Java and in Bali. In *tayuban*, a popular form of entertainment at parties, male guests take turns dancing with professional female dancers. One of my oldest teachers, R. Ng. Mloyowidodo, told me how he and other relatively low-status men would wait many hours for their turn. He claimed that his wife would look on with pride from the women’s quarters.

Dual competence in dancing and singing was also developed in other, more respectable venues. At the Mangkunagaran palace, a dance drama called *Langen Driya*, invented in the second half of the nineteenth century, required a cast of women who could dance and sing. There was no question of dancing with guests or patrons—this was a staged performance genre that told a story of medieval Java through dance, song, and gamelan accompaniment. “*Ladrang Asmaradana*” in something like its current form originated in this form of court entertainment.

Whatever the controversy over female gamelan singers’ status and reputation, there can be no doubt that they are the best-known and best-paid performers other than shadow play puppeteers. Their fee for a performance may exceed the male instrumentalists’ pay by a factor of 20 or more. They often sit in a place of prominence, and they have opportunities to sing featured solos while other musicians remain almost faceless members of the group. Yet there is also no question that they are objectified for the male gaze, on display in flamboyant colors, lavish clothes, makeup, and jewelry. In shadow play performances in particular, they are often expected to project a flirtatious image and are expected to keep their cool when they are subjected to comments (some stylized, some spontaneous) from male musicians and the *dhalang* during their solos. Male musicians with whom I have spoken over the

years clearly have a highly developed appreciation for the singing of particular *pesindhèn*. At the same time, most of them consider themselves more knowledgeable than the singers about vocal art. These women truly occupy a conflicted position. Dissertations by Susan Walton and Nancy Cooper address these issues as well as female singers' struggles to gain and maintain control over their images and careers.

Men sing primarily as a chorus, the *gérong*. This male choral singing is so ubiquitous in gamelan performances today and so characteristic of the sound of the ensemble that I was surprised to learn that it is a far more recent practice than female *sindhènan*, probably developing only at the end of the nineteenth century (see Sumarsam 1995: 97ff for further discussion of this history). Within a gamelan performance, there are a few opportunities for male solos, but these soloists do not receive the same sort or amount of attention as the female singers.

There is little specialization among singers. They are generally expected to sing anything in the standard gamelan repertoire, and there is a steady flow of new pieces that singers learn primarily from notation or recordings. Unlike Western-derived choruses, which divide female voices into sopranos and altos and male voices into tenors and basses, all singers are expected to cover the same range, which is a bit more than two octaves. For most gamelan tunings, a relatively high voice (roughly equivalent to a soprano or tenor) is more appropriate than a low one.

All singers use some ornamentation, ranging from vibrato to quick turns and dips. *Pesindhèn* may become known for their particular vocal qualities in addition to their abilities. Timbre is not standardized. Some singers have relatively piercing voices, while others are relatively mellow. Singing in a nasal head voice is common, but not all singers do so. No matter how much the vocal timbre varies, it always differs markedly from the soft, smooth, and relatively low-pitched crooning featured in most Indonesian pop songs.

POETRY, SONG, AND GAMELAN

To understand Javanese song, it is necessary to consider connections with other forms of cultural expression such as literature, philosophy, theater, and dance. The principle of interconnectedness is nowhere more apparent than in the association of singing and poetry.

Until recently Javanese *tembang*—the word means both poem and song—was written to be sung for a listening audience rather than read silently by an individual. Much of it was written in poetic meters called *macapat* (pronounced maw-chaw-pat). Each of these meters is

associated with specific melodies. Since the length of a stanza (and its constituent lines) is defined by the meter, any melody that fits one verse in a given meter will fit all others in that meter. Thus, knowing these melodies, one can sing any poem written in *macapat* meters. Social gatherings at which people take turns singing consecutive verses of a long poem have become less common than they were a few generations ago (documented in Arps 1992), but knowledge of the meters and their melodies is widespread among musicians and is applied to a large body of poetry written from the late eighteenth century to the present. In this chapter I shall focus on song in the context of gamelan performance.

A *macapat* meter is defined by the number of lines in a stanza, the number of syllables in each line, and the ending vowel of each line (any consonant following that vowel does not affect the meter). For instance, any verse in Pangkur meter will have the same number of lines per stanza, the same distribution of syllables, and the same pattern of final vowels as the first verse in figure 4.1, the famous opening of the *Serat Wédhatama*, a nineteenth-century didactic poem attributed to Prince Mangkunagara IV, who ruled from 1857 to 1881. Note how, in addition to following the rules of the poetic meter, the author used alliteration extensively, binding the words in a twisting chain of closely linked sounds. In the first verse, the author promises to unfold the secret knowledge of the kings of Java through song. In the second excerpt from this poem, he says that this secret knowledge must be achieved through practice and the suppression of evil passions (CD track 28).

The *macapat* meters are usually associated with a particular range of affects or types of poetic content. For instance, Pangkur is appropriate for passages about infatuated love. Asmaradana is also used when the subject is love, but it is more appropriate when the situation is grave, as it is in the passage quoted in figure 4.1: in this verse Damarwulan, a medieval hero, bids adieu to his distant love as he faces almost certain death.

A lengthy poem is likely to have several sections, each being in a different *macapat* meter and therefore requiring a change of melody. The *Serat Wédhatama*, for instance, uses four meters, with numerous stanzas in each. Though it is rarely sung in its entirety, select verses from this widely known classic of Javanese literature are sung in most gamelan performances; in addition to *macapat*, some poems in longer meters—and often in more archaic language—are sung, usually as a solo introduction to a gamelan composition.

Unlike songs in many other musical practices around the world, relatively few Javanese gamelan pieces have specific texts. For most



Macapat Pangkur

| Line Number | Number of Syllables | Final Vowel | Sample verse from <i>Serat Wédhatama</i> |
|-------------|---------------------|-------------|--|
| 1 | 8 | a | Mingkar mingkur ing angkara |
| 2 | 11 | i | Akarana karenan mardi siwi |
| 3 | 8 | u | Sinawung resmining kidung |
| 4 | 7 | a | Sinuba sinukarta |
| 5 | 12 | u | Mrih kretarta pakartining ngèlmu luhung |
| 6 | 8 | a | Kang tumrap nèng tanah jawa |
| 7 | 8 | i | Agama ageming aji |

Macapat Pucung

| Line Number | Number of Syllables | Final Vowel | Sample Verse from <i>Serat Wédhatama</i> |
|-------------|---------------------|-------------|--|
| 1 | 4 | u | Ngèlmu iku |
| 2 | 8 | u | Kalakoné kanthi laku |
| 3 | 6 | a | Lekasé lawan kas |
| 4 | 8 | i | Tegesé kas nyantosani |
| 5 | 12 | a | Setya budya pangekesé dur angkara |

Macapat Asmaradana

| Line Number | Number of Syllables | Final Vowel | Sample Verse from <i>Langen Driya</i> |
|-------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | 8 | i | Anjasmara ari mami |
| 2 | 8 | a | Mas mirah, kulaka warta |
| 3 | 8 | o | Dasihmu tan wurung layon |
| 4 | 8 | a | Anèng kutha Prabalingga |
| 5 | 8 | a | Prang tandhing lan Urubisma |
| 6 | 8 | u | Karia mukti, wong ayu |
| 7 | 8 | a | Pun kakang pamit palastra |



FIGURE 4.1 Examples of macapat meters. The second example is sung by Midiyanto on CD track 28.

pieces, the singers can choose from a large body of texts in the appropriate *macapat* meter. The poetic structure is almost always preserved in performance. This means that a line of poetry corresponds to a sung phrase (or pair of phrases). Furthermore, these phrases are generally shaped to correspond with the colotomic structure of the accompanying *gendhing*.

This correspondence is clear in “Ketawang Subakastawa,” a widely performed traditional piece of unknown age and provenance. This piece is based on the 16-beat *ketawang* cycle, which consists of two 8-beat phrases (*kenongan*), unlike the four phrases in a *ladrang* and most other forms (see figure 2.3). Like most other pieces in *ketawang* form, “Subakastawa” begins with a cycle (labeled *umpak* in figure 4.2) that is played once or twice in the low register before the male chorus, the *gérong*, begins to sing in the *ngelik* section. As the musicians repeat the *umpak*, you should be able to hear the *rebab* soar up to the high register at 0:53 to cue the other musicians to proceed to the *ngelik* section. *Ngelik* refers to the high register.

ACTIVITY 4.1 Listen to the recording of “Ketawang Subakastawa” that you heard in chapter 2 (CD track 10). This is an unusually short performance that goes through the piece just once. Study the notation with the recording. Ignoring the female singer for the moment, follow figure 4.2 as the *gérong* sing their part. Now sing along with the recording. Feel the phrasing: two phrases in each line of notation, the first ending on *kenong* (middle of the line) and the second on *gong* (end of the line).

The text “*midering rat*,” taken from another work by Prince Mangkunagara IV (*Serat Manuhara*), is just one of several popular poems in the *macapat* meter *Kinanthi* that are known by all singers and sung in almost any gamelan performance. *Kinanthi* is a particular favorite for composing *gérongan* melodies because its structure is more symmetrical than other *macapat*, consisting of six lines of equal length, eight syllables apiece. This means that it is easier to fit to the regular phrase lengths of a *ketawang* or *ladrang* than an irregular meter like *Pangkur* (see figure 4.1), whose poetic lines differ greatly in length and total an odd number.

Aside from the choice of text, the members of the male chorus do not have much flexibility. Since they must sing their part in unison,

"Ketawang Subakastawa Sléndro Sanga"
buka played on *gender*
umpak (played twice on CD track 10)

- + - - + - - - + - - - + - - -
 . 1 . 6 . 1 . 5 . 1 . 6 . 1 . 5

ngelik

. 2 . 1 . 6 . 5 . 2 . 1 . 6 . 5

2 2 231 232 616 5 . 6 i 65232 1 . 232 616 5

Midering rat ange - la - ngut

La-la - na nja - jah ne - ga - ri

. 2 . 1 . 6 . 5 . 2 . 1 . 6 . 5

2 2 231 232 616 5 . 6 i 65232 1 . 232 616 5 61

Mubeng tepi- ning sa - mo - dra

Su-mengka ang - graning wu - kir

. 2 . 1 . 2 . 6 . 2 . 1 . 6 . 5

1 1 121 2 2 23216 2 2 231 232 616 5

A-na-la-sak wa-na - wa - sa

Tumurun mring jurang tre - bis

Midering rat angelangut

Traveling around the world to far off places

Lalana njajah negari

Wandering to many places

Mubeng tepining samodra

Going around the edge of the ocean

Sumengka angraning wukir

Climbing to the peak of a mountain

Analacak warawasa

Traversing the thick forest

Tumurun mring jurang trebis

Descending into a deep ravine.

individual elaboration is not valued. The female singer, on the other hand, has far more freedom. When the *gérong* sings, she is supposed to sing the same text, but she lags behind, her timing flexible, and sings around—rather than on—the beat. She shapes a melody that follows the general contour of the choral melody without being an exact copy.

What about the first part of the piece, the *umpak*, where the *gérong* is silent? Here the *pesindhèn* has still greater freedom, selecting short texts from a stock of *wangsalan* and also picking melodic phrases appropriate to the musical context. A *wangsalan* is a riddle consisting of a pair of 12-syllable lines. You can hear an example in the first two *gongan* of “Ketawang Subakastawa” (CD track 10). The *pesindhèn* Sri Sularni sings “Trahing nata garwa risang dananjaya / dèn prayitna sabarang aywa sembrana,” which Midiyanto helped me translate as “The blood of kings, the wife of Arjuna / be cautious all of you, don’t be careless.” The two epithets in the first line of the riddle refer to Sembadra, who is the daughter of King Basudewa and wife of Prince Arjuna. The answer to the riddle comes at the end of the second line. The word *sembrana* (careless or rude) sounds like the name Sembadra.

The performance of this *wangsalan* in the unfolding structure of “Ketawang Subakastawa” demonstrates both flexibility and appropriateness. Sri Sularni did not have to reproduce a specific rhythm or melodic contour but she had to fit her singing to the structure of the piece, aiming for the goal tones (*sèlèh*) at the main structural points where *kenong* and gong sound. She also needed to sing a melody appropriate to *patet sléndro sanga*, the mode (*patet*) of the piece. She waited for the drummer to slow to *irama 2* before she began to sing. Since she needed to fit the first line of the *wangsalan* into the first *gongan* she sang it straight through, ending just after the gong. In the next *gongan* the tempo had settled, so she had time to divide the second line of the *wangsalan* into two parts tied to the two most important points in the cycle: a 4-syllable segment ending on *kenong* and an 8-syllable segment ending on gong. Between these points she interspersed short phrases that are not part of the *wangsalan*, singing *ya mas, ya mas* (yes brother) at 0:36 and *éman, éman, éman* (what a pity) at 0:52. Such “filler” is sung very frequently in conjunction with *wangsalan*.

Wangsalan have been orally transmitted for generations, but it is also increasingly common to write them down. Almost all female singers

FIGURE 4.2 (opposite) The *gérong* part for “Ketawang Subakastawa” with *balungan* and *colotomic gongs*. The text, one of several that can be sung to this melody, is taken from *Serat Manuhara* by Mangkunagara IV. The *kethuk* and *kempyang* parts are notated only in the first line, but follow the same pattern for every line thereafter.

keep notebooks filled with lyrics, including both *wangsalan* and specific song texts such as “midering rat” and other *macapat* texts. This enables considerable flexibility in performance because words are not tied to melodies. It is not uncommon to see a *pesindhèn* singing while leafing through her notebook for the next set of lyrics.

Numerous other pieces are composed in *ketawang* form. Most follow the model heard here, performed in a sedate *irama 2*, with alternation between *umpak* and *ngelik* sections. Since many *ketawang* share the same *umpak* section, you may not know which *ketawang* is being played until the musicians reach the *ngelik* section. Every *ketawang* has a unique *ngelik* with a unique *gérongan* melody. Some, such as “Ketawang Puspawarna” (Wade 2004 and track 8 on the CD accompanying that book), also have specially composed texts.

The prolific and very popular musician Ki Nartosabdho (1925–1985), who greatly influenced Javanese performing arts from the 1950s to the present day, took the traditional composition, “Ketawang Subakastawa,” and created a new arrangement. He transposed it from *sléndro* to *pélog* (a common transformation for other pieces) and added vocal parts with new lyrics in colloquial rather than poetic Javanese, eschewing *macapat* meters. The text does not speak in mystical terms, as older poems often did, but offers a naturalistic description of the beauty of birds, mountains, forests, and crops in the fields. Nartosabdho also added contrast by switching to lively *ciblon* drumming for the *umpak* section when it recurs.

ACTIVITY 4.2 Compare the second recording of “Ketawang Subakastawa” (CD track 29) to CD track 10. You should hear the difference in tuning (*pélog* rather than *sléndro*). Now compare the phrasing of the vocal part with the more traditional *sléndro* performance of this piece. Copy figure 4.2 and mark where the vocal phrases on CD track 29 begin and end. Write a brief description of the differences. How do the vocal phrases fit the coloromic structure? How independent is the *pesindhèn* in Nartosabdho’s version?

Both female and male singers have other parts to play in a gamelan performance. During passages with *ciblon* drumming that have no composed vocal part, the male singers will clap interlocking patterns to fill in the beat and enhance the liveliness of the drumming. In some pieces, it is appropriate for the male singers to add stylized calls. Some are like carefully controlled cries or shouts, purportedly derived from hunting calls (Brown and Toth 1971); others are actual melodies with a few

words. The cries or shouts herald the sounding of the main colotomic instruments—gong, *kenong*, and *kempul*.

ACTIVITY 4.3 Listen again to the beginning of the *talu*, the overture to a shadow play (CD track 21). The first piece in this medley is “*Ladrang Sri Katon*.” At 0:43 you should hear the men call out just after the *kempul* stroke and before the gong. They then sing their regular vocal part (which I will discuss presently). At 1:48 they sing a short phrase leading to the *kempul* stroke. When do you hear another one of these calls or short phrases? It ends at 3:26.

“*Ladrang Sri Katon*” offers another opportunity to hear standard practice for male and female singers. Composed in a 32-beat *ladrang* form, it spans two gong cycles. The main choral part is sung in the second *gongan*, using a text that is probably the most commonly sung text of all, used in hundreds of pieces in *ladrang* form. It consists of a series of riddles and puns similar to the *wangsalan* sung by *pesindhèn*, but cast in a different form: four lines of eight syllables apiece. Notice that in this piece the first and second lines of the choral melody share the same ending while the third and fourth lines are identical throughout. This is an unusually repetitive vocal part.

ACTIVITY 4.4 Copy the *balungan* notated in figure 4.3, and mark in the phrases of the *pesindhèn* while listening to CD track 21. Note once again how the *pesindhèn* sings the same text as the *gèrong* but lags behind and improvises a somewhat different melody. In the other *gongan*, she sings *wangsalan*, as she did in the first *gongan* of “*Ketawang Subakastawa*” (CD track 10). Try to show when she stops and starts relative to the *balungan* and the male singers. Now compare that to the *nigelik* section on the 1930s recording of “*Ladrang Sri Katon*” in *pélog* (CD track 5 contains only the *nigelik*). The choral melody is changed to accommodate the change from *slendro* to *pélog*; the *balungan* has been modified slightly, too. How does the relationship between female and male vocal lines differ?

The next piece in the *talu* overture medley is in *ketawang* form, like “*Ketawang Subakastawa*.” It therefore has a 16-beat cycle divided into two 8-beat *kenongan*, but unlike “*Subakastawa*,” its *balungan* is fuller, with

"Ladrang Sri Katon Siéndro Manyura"
buka

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| first <i>gongan</i> | + | - | 3 | 2 | 2 | . | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | ⑥ |
| . | 2 | . | 1 | . | . | . | 2 | 2 | . | . | . | . | . | . | 6 |
| . | 2 | . | 1 | . | . | . | 2 | 2 | . | . | . | . | . | . | 6 |
| . | 2 | . | 1 | . | . | . | 2 | 2 | . | . | . | . | . | . | 6 |
| . | 3 | . | 6 | . | . | . | 3 | 3 | . | . | . | . | . | . | ② |

ngelik

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|---|
| . | 5 | . | 6 | . | . | . | 5 | 5 | . | . | . | . | . | . | 3 |
| . | 5 | 5 | . | 6 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 165 | 3 |

Pa - ra - bé Sang Sma - ra ba - ngun

| | | | | | | | |
|------|------|-------|------|------|-------|-------|----------------|
| . | i | . | . | . | 5 | . | 3 |
| . | i | 3 | i | i | 5 | 3 | 6 |
| | | | | | | | <u>i 6 5 3</u> |
| Se - | pat | dom - | ba | ka - | li | O - | ya |
| | | | | | | | |
| . | 2 | . | 1 | . | 2 | . | 6 |
| . | 3 | 3 | i | 3 | 2 | 3 | i |
| | | | | | | | <u>i 2 i 3</u> |
| A - | ja | do - | lan | lan | wong | pri - | ya |
| | | | | | | | |
| . | 2 | . | 1 | . | 2 | . | 6 |
| . | 3 | 3 | i | 3 | 2 | 3 | i |
| | | | | | | | <u>i 2 i 3</u> |
| Ce - | re - | mèh | no - | ra | pra - | sa - | ja |

FIGURE 4.3 The gérong part for "Ladrang Sri Katon" with balungam and colatomic gongs. The kcthuik and kempyang parts are notated only in the first line, but follow the same pattern for every line thereafter.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----|---|----|---|----|----|-------|-----------|--------|----|--------|--------|-------|----|----------|------|------|------|-------|
| <i>rebab</i> | 653 | 3 | 56 | i | i2 | 26 | 6i23 | i | i2 | 2 | 2332i | 6i | i | 2 | 6 | i | i | i | i |
| <i>pesindhèn</i> | 6 | 5 | 3 | . | . | . | . | . | 23 | 2 | i | 2 | . | 23 | 2i | 2 | 66 | 5356 | i |
| | | | | | | | | | Pumapa | ta | mirah | ingsun | | | prihatin | was- | pa | gung | mijil |
| <i>gérong</i> | . | . | 3 | 3 | 35 | 6 | .i2 | .3i2i | 6 | . | 33 | 32i | . | i | i | .66 | i22 | i | |
| | | | | | | | mirah | ing - sun | | | Priha- | tin | was - | | pa | gung | mi - | jil | |
| <i>slentihem &</i> | (6) | 3 | 3 | . | 5 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 6 | i | 3 | 2 | 1 | (6) | i | i |
| <i>gongs</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

FIGURE 4.4 Excerpt from "Ketawang Suksma Ilang" performed by Sudarsi (pesindhèn) and Mitiyanto (rcbab) with other members of Hando Budoyo (CD track 21, 4:13-4:51). This is the beginning of a frequently sung text in kimanthi meter in which the exiled prince Rama asks his love Sita why she is crying.

a note on every beat. It is also treated differently in this case, with a cue from the drummer telling most of the musicians to stop playing and let the singers, *rebab*, and *gendèr* sound clearly in a softer, more transparent texture. This offers a perfect opportunity to hear the intertwining of *rebab*, *gèrong*, and *pesindhèn*, each performing a different version of the melody, unique in its timing and details of pitch but conforming to the same *sèlèh* (goal tones) and general melodic contours (see figure 4.4, which corresponds to the segment from 4:13 to 4:51 on CD track 21). The text is another widely sung example of the Kinanthi *macapat* meter, six lines of eight syllables.



ACTIVITY 4.5 Now listen to the rest of the *Talu*, after the *ketawang* (which ends at 5:47). Hear how the *pesindhèn* recedes into the background, singing only *wangsalan* and “filler” as the *saron*, *bonang*, and *colofonic gongs* come into the sonic foreground. When they reach their greatest intensity, the singing stops altogether. What is the time code?

CONCLUSION

Javanese singing with gamelan exemplifies the three themes of flexibility, appropriateness, and interconnectedness. Female singers have considerable flexibility, not to improvise freely but to choose texts and melodic phrases from as large a stock as they have amassed. This should be done with a sense of appropriateness to the performance context, the piece, and the style in which it is being performed. Other musicians can be quite critical of singers whose choices they find inappropriate. The male singers who perform as *gèrong* have far less flexibility because they must make their voices match and sing the same text and melody, preferably with all the same nuances. This applies, too, in the many instances that *pesindhèn* sing as a group, with or without the men. Song texts taken from famous literary works and used in various musical genres strengthen the sense of interconnectedness of the arts. Intertextuality is pervasive.

The types of singing described in this chapter are central to Javanese musical practice, but they do not by any means represent its entirety. In chapter 6, for instance, I will discuss the contrasting types of vocals sung by the *dhalang* in theatrical performances, but first I turn to the elaborating parts that so often entwine with the vocals.