

just exactly what sort of individual character Balinese pieces within specific genre categories have.

Using the results of that comparison, I will further compare some aspects of the Balinese pieces with portions of the first movement of Robert Schumann's Opus 47 *Piano Quartet in E♭ Major* from 1842. Schumann presumably would have relied on Goethe for knowledge of anything even generically Asian, and I wager that today there are more toes on my feet than Balinese who know Robert Schumann's music. So why this East-West connection, and why to this Schumann piece? Well, it is one of my very favorites, and I know it by heart. It has nothing overtly to do with Bali, not even by coincidence. And that is exactly the kind of comparison I am interested in justifying. Because inside, I relate the two musics together strongly. They both have high—in fact, the highest—prestige value for music within their respective cultures, though for different reasons. They both get frequent play on my inner iPod. I have an inkling that they are congruent in transcendent ways, despite all the potential for mistranslation from one time and culture and medium to another.

Moreover, my instinct says they are roughly equivalent in scope and impact. It wouldn't do, for example, to compare the Balinese pieces to Beethoven's *Eroica*, which would be too big and omnivorous, nor to a Chopin *Nocturne*, which would be too small and intimate. The Piano Quartet is "just right": elaborately arranged, serious and ambitious, and exemplary of the ethos of chamber music, qualities I also associate with the tightly rehearsed music of Balinese repertoires. So, even though I know that this is a shotgun wedding, and that I am groping and guessing, I wager that taking these specific pieces out of the worlds of their respective contexts and juxtaposing them will stimulate new ideas leading to a useful comparison I present this to you as an article of faith. *Useful* is defined in terms of helping me to integrate my experiences of these musics. Perhaps my investigation will help me understand whether I experience one more deeply than the other, or not, and whether that experience is something I must own entirely, or whether it is based on something "out there" in the music itself.

Two Lelambatan

The two Balinese works I consider are called *Lokarya* and *Tabuh Gari*.² Both come from the genre *lelambatan*, a major category of sacred compositions dating from the past several centuries, played at temple ceremonies or state

2. *Lokarya* is an original composition by composer Wayan Sinti in strict classical *lelambatan* style (see below). Its title is a shortening of the names Wayan Lotring, Nyoman Kaler, and Gusti Madé Putu Griya, three prominent mid-twentieth-century

occasions.³ They still are, but today *lelambatan* have also become centerpieces of popular secular gamelan competitions. *Lelambatan* are complex, up to thirty minutes long, and considered by Balinese to be profound. Until the late twentieth century, they were performed in an austere, pared-down style constructed mainly from a series of gong cycles arranged around a central cycle called the *pengawak* (figure 10.1) which has the broadest gong pattern and weightiest connotations. In general, the tempo is quick at the outset, slows for the *pengawak* cycle, and then quickens approaching the end, but there is a great deal of local tempo change. The cycles are fleshed out with austere, fixed melodies of minimal rhythmic variety composed using a five-tone scale to fall within a range of two octaves (ten available tones), and played on metallophones. My analysis zeroes in on the *pengawak* sections of these works, each lasting about 2:45. ●

The two *pengawaks*' central, "core" melodies are represented in figure 10.2's comparative transcription with stemless quarter, half, and double-whole notes all equivalent to half notes in duration. The open note heads signify points of greater metric stress arriving every eight, or, in the case of the double whole notes and zeroes, still greater stress every thirty-two beats. This hierarchy expands through the sequence of powers of two from 1 to 256 to regulate meter throughout the cycle. Since the two pieces share exactly the same form, they can be precisely vertically aligned on the page, enabling quick comparison of their core melodies and other features. They are notated using C#–D–E–G#–A, an approximation of the Balinese *pélog* scale (note that E–G# and A–C# intervals are scalar adjacencies). The interlocking rhythms of the two lap-held, double-skinned conical drums are beamed across a staff with two sets of two lines separated by a larger space. The upper line of each set shows an unpitched left-hand slap, the two lower lines represent a pair of deep pitches played with a mallet held in the right hand.⁴

In old style *lelambatan*, the melody is elaborated flatly in certain conventional ways on various other instruments and underpinned with simple drum

Balinese musicians to whom Sinti wished to pay homage. *Tabuh Gari* was composed by Wayan Beratha, but it is in large part a modern arrangement of preexisting material. For more on Beratha and Sinti, see Tenzer 2000, chapters 8 and 9

3. See further Tenzer 2000: 358–363.

4. Figure 10.2 does not show every part in the texture, only the ones most essential to the structure. Among those omitted are a small choir of bamboo flutes and a *rebab* (bowed spike fiddle), prominent throughout the *Lokarya* recording, that embellish the core melody in their own idioms.

rhythms that mainly serve to herald the arrival of upcoming strokes on gongs of various sizes. In recent years, more intricate ways of elaborating core melodies and drum patterns have evolved and it is through this process that the music has sprouted rich details that give it critical mass for comparison with Schumann. It is in this more composed-out—but still highly constrained—style that both *Lokarya* and *Tabuh Gari* were created for competitions in 1993 and 1978, respectively.

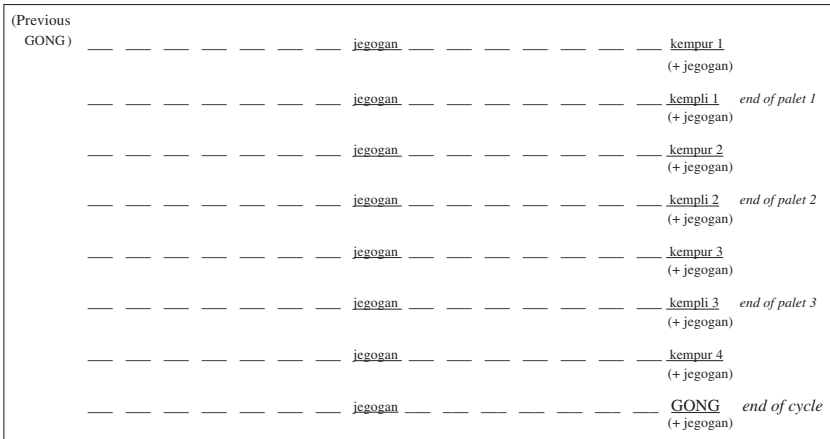


Figure 10.1. Schematic of *pengawak* in *tabuh empat* form. Each dash represents 2 beats (= one “core melody” tone).

The length of the melody and the pattern of gong strokes marking the *pengawak* section are strictly determined by tradition. In both *Lokarya* and *Tabuh Gari*, a gong pattern called *tabuh empat* is specified (figure 10.1). All *pengawak* in *tabuh empat* form have the following ten structural features:

- The 256 total beats are separated into four sections, called *palet*, of 64 beats each.
- The first three *palet* conclude with a stroke of the small gong *kempli*.
- The last *palet* concludes with the large gong.
- Each *palet* is bisected by a stroke of the medium-sized gong called *kempur*.
- Each quarter-*palet* concludes with a melodic bass tone on the instrument *jegogan* that matches the tone of the core melody at that point.
- The core melody is played by mid-range instruments called *calung*. For each *palet*, the melody consists of a series of thirty-two tones, each of two beats’ duration, except for the first *palet*, in which the first four or five tones are dropped. Underscores in figure 10.1 represent the two-beat *calung* tones.
- The large group of metallophones, gong-chime instruments, and bamboo flutes not performing these basic structural and melodic

surface melody **Tabuh Gari Pengawak** *trompong solo* *tutti* *rit.*

core melody

2 drums Drums play "batu-batu" improv. throughout when bracketed. 1st Kempur

(256) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32

surface melody **Lokarya Pengawak** *trompong solo* *rit.* *rit.* *(div.)*

core melody

2 drums

33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64

1st Kempuli

(non div.) *(div.)*

Figure 10.2. A comparative transcription of the *pengawak* of *Lokarya* and *Tabuh Gari*.

Figure 10.2. (Continued)

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 65 to 96. The piano part (top staff) features a complex, rhythmic texture with many sixteenth notes. The bass part (middle staff) consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *p* (piano). Performance markings include *acc.* (accelerando) from measure 65 to 72, *rit.* (ritardando) from measure 92 to 95, and *2nd Kempur* starting at measure 95. The second system covers measures 97 to 128. The piano part continues with similar rhythmic patterns. Dynamics include *f* (non div.) and *p* (div.). Performance markings include *2nd Kempli* starting at measure 127. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat sign.

Figure 10.2. (Continued)

The musical score is divided into three systems, each consisting of a guitar part (top staff) and a piano part (bottom staff). The key signature is one sharp (F#).

System 1: Measures 129-160. The guitar part features a complex rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes. The piano part consists of a simple harmonic accompaniment. Performance markings include *f* (forte) and *p* (piano). A section starting at measure 156 is marked *rit.* (ritardando) and labeled "3rd Kempur".

System 2: Measures 161-192. The guitar part continues with similar rhythmic patterns. The piano part has some rests. Performance markings include *f*, *p*, and *(non div.)* (non-diviso). A section starting at measure 189 is marked *f* and labeled "3rd Kempur".

System 3: Measures 193-204. The guitar part continues with similar rhythmic patterns. The piano part has some rests. Performance markings include *f* and *p*. A section starting at measure 199 is marked *f* and labeled "3rd Kempur".

Figure 10.2. (Continued)

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 193-224) features a complex rhythmic pattern in the upper staves, with a **4th Kempur** section starting at measure 221. The lower staves show a more melodic line with a **f** dynamic marking. The second system (measures 225-256) includes a **trompong solo** section from measure 225 to 240, followed by a **tutti** section from measure 241 to 256. The **Final Gong** is indicated at the end of the piece. Dynamics include **p** (piano) and **f** (forte).

markers are elaborating the melody. Elaboration proceeds in states of either soft or loud dynamic, simple or complex melodic or drumming pattern, and in tutti or partial texture. In a few places, an instrument of small gongs called *trompong* is foregrounded while the other elaborating instruments rest. Actually it is always present, but it emerges on the recordings at the beginnings of both pieces, beats 225–240 in *Tabuh Gari*, plus other brief connectors (not all shown in the transcription). The flutes are also prominent, especially throughout *Lokarya*.

- Movement among dynamic states is built into the music and meticulously rehearsed and memorized. The changes are decisive and sharply juxtaposed, almost always set off with a brief break (a notated rest in the transcription) in the elaboration's rhythmic continuity, and cued by special drum rhythms. Crucial to the analysis, boxes have been drawn around these time spans of constant dynamics.
- A normative and simple elaboration style called *norot* is used well over 75 percent of the time on all elaborating instruments except the *trompong* and flutes. Shown in its basic form on the “surface melody” staves of figure 10.2, it is a continuous pattern of alternation between scale-tone neighbors at a rate equivalent to sixteenth notes. Interruptions of this flow are significant. The lower tone in each pair of tones matches the operative core melody tone at that moment, though the *norot* does not move to match *all* core tones; the ones it skips are heard as passing or neighbor tones within the core melody itself. When *norot* does shift to align with a new core melody tone, a double-note figure is inserted as a pick-up.⁵ Occasional substitution of different elaboration types for *norot* is musically weighted and can occur more and more as the cycle progresses. The transcription highlights these as boxes within the boxes delineating dynamic change and pauses in the continuity of the surface melody.
- Many tempo changes mark the form.

As a performer and student of this music, I have never lacked for stimulation or pleasure. Negotiating the span of such a long melody, with its many structural nodes and interlocking melodic elaborations and drum rhythms, is a deep musical challenge. So is memorizing and attuning oneself to the subtle beauty of the comparatively featureless core melody, and learning to feel the tension and release of its moods in a Balinese way.

5. See, for example, the double C# leading to beat 38 or the double D leading to beat 40 in the surface melody staff of *Tabuh Gari*, and innumerable similar places.

Yet clearly, the compositional constraints in this genre are severe. They are far more severe than I would ever impose on myself when I compose music and, I think it fair to say, quite a bit more severe than the limits Schumann experienced. In fact, I have always been unable to rid myself of a certain skepticism about Balinese claims to appreciate and evaluate individual compositions in this genre on terms refined enough to justify the awarding of things like the prestigious composition prizes they have. For decades I have listened as Balinese expert juries and thoughtful musicians discuss and compare endlessly, distinguishing among works in terms of their “refined and balanced sense of melody,” “ebbing and flowing and wave-like undulations,” “tasteful drumming patterns,” “depth of expression,” and so forth, or the lack of any of these. Over many years I attended rehearsals and performances and listened to dozens of recordings of this music.⁶ I studied hard, but I still could not hear the differences they claimed to hear so naturally, and besides, according to my own standards, any two Schumann chamber works (to take the example at hand) seemed to me hugely more distinctive. Thus, deep in this music of sacred origin, where I am assured the soul of Balinese music resides, I could only weakly recognize or identify individuality. Were the Balinese posturing and telling me what they thought I wanted to hear? Was I fated to always remain an outsider and never hear gamelan as deeply as I might? Was this my problem, theirs, or the music’s? *Was* Western music more individuated than this, or wasn’t it, and was the question itself even a fair one? The riddle of this intimate dilemma brought home to me with uncommon precision the feeling of being caught between two cultures.

I had long since accepted this unease as permanent when I had an unexpected breakthrough. The young Balinese musician directing the gamelan at my university, Wayan Sudirana, and some friends and I were talking about this very issue. Sudirana admitted that when he was younger he shared my inability to critically distinguish among *lelambatan* the way other Balinese claim to, and he said he felt puzzled and worried, like me, that he was an inadequate listener. Just to have him confess that was reassuring, and teased me with the promise of cross-cultural empathy. But, he went on, as an adult he at last felt himself developing sensitivity to what Balinese call the *bayu* of the music—which he defined as its energy, breath, organicism, flow. “*Bayu* is behind the notes,” he said. “The composer puts *bayu* in the music just like he/

6. I was able to closely monitor the complete three-month rehearsal-to-performance trajectory for Balinese gamelan competitions in 1982, 1987, and 1989, and to a lesser but still significant extent in 1985, 1991 and 1992, and spoke at length throughout these periods with musicians and jurors.

she chooses the notes and rhythms. And I discovered that every *lelambatan* has a *bayu* all its own” (Sudirana, pers. comm., February 2005). Now in some ways that remained for me a cryptic idea, but since elements like tempo, dynamics, and orchestration are so carefully composed and rehearsed in this music, I also glimpsed how I could translate *bayu* into something concrete and susceptible to comparison (by adding the boxes to the transcription) that could possibly help me out of my quandary.

Of course I well knew what *bayu* was before Sudirana mentioned it. I considered it to be a dimension of musical macrorhythm expressed through the changes in tempo, dynamic, and texture—all aspects that until then I had assumed behaved as conventionally as the gong structure does. I took it for granted that these features always changed in much the same ways at the same points in relation to the gongs in each piece of this type, which would, if so, mitigate further against individuality. But I had never really stopped to analyze closely, an unfortunate reflection, perhaps, of a practiced overemphasis on the more standard analytical foci: pitch, rhythm patterning, and form. On the one hand, there was great appeal in Sudirana’s point, because his definition of *bayu* as energy or flow goes hand-in-glove with Balinese musical values of community and togetherness. On the other hand, I flashed on the idea that Schumann’s music has no shortage of its own *bayu*. But then I reflected: what if Balinese music in fact locates its very individuality in *bayu*, because their system of oral transmission, memorization, and group learning nurtures special sensitivity to *bayu*-like modes of expression? Is *bayu* the medium through which composition and ensemble virtuosity integrate to forge each piece’s distinct identity? It occurred to me that this might serve the same individuating function as things in Schumann like piquant modulations and harmonic colors, expansive cantabile melodies, multilayered patterns of tension and release, and other compositional nonpareils of the European tradition.

Figure 10.2 reveals that *Tabuh Gari* and *Lokarya* in fact have richly distinctive *bayu*. In the passage linking beats 32 and 64 (second half of the first *palet*), for example, *Tabuh Gari* abruptly shifts twice from *piano* to *forte* and back again. Such coordinated rapid change is stylistically modern and suggests a Balinese self-image of possessing sufficient power and competence to master the challenges of modernity. The dynamic contrasts are forcefully articulated and offset by intervening rests of differing lengths. Even the sixteenth-note rest at beat 43 achieves musical and visual importance as the musicians inhale together, raise their mallet arms in an explicitly choreographed unison motion during the tiny pause, and restrike their instruments at full volume. *Lokarya*, by contrast, sustains a *piano* dynamic throughout this segment. The downstemmed (mainly) half notes shown correspond to an orchestration technique whereby a group of four middle-register metallophones that would normally

join in the *norot* play this variant of the core melody instead. *Norot* still dominates the sound; however, this change plus the textural steady-state are sufficient to reference the older, premodern way of playing *lelambatan*, and hence evoke a putative purer and more sacred time in the Bali of centuries past. As the music unfolds through the remaining three *palet*, *Tabuh Gari*'s rate of dynamic and texture change varies within a narrower band than *Lokarya*'s, for the latter accrues momentum for change as it proceeds until, by the end, disruption—and the evocation of the modern—occurs more than at any point in the former.

The process of making the transcription opened me to new levels of appreciation and perception that had remained inaccessible for the many years I have been studying gamelan. The shock of that realization—that after so long I can still add significant new dimensions to my appreciation of Balinese music—suggests that while *lelambatan* are formulaic in some parameters, they are still full of irregular nooks, crannies, and paths to explore. One need only glance back and forth between *Tabuh Gari* and *Lokarya* to see these differences in force throughout. *Lelembatan* music may be understood by Balinese as sacred, but it is not impersonal, just as so much of J. S. Bach's music was created with devotional intent but is nevertheless a repository of many of its creator's most inspired ideas. And though I can't now claim empirically that these examples of gamelan music are as individually nuanced as two comparable European works, my new sensitivity to *bayu* is reassuring evidence that there is ever more depth to be discovered, which may be all I need to respond to Bill Benjamin's question.

Nodes of Comparison

Carrying along my awareness of these nooks and crannies as I now turn to the Schumann Piano Quartet, I first need to further articulate a context for comparing it with *lelambatan*. This is a key juncture in the progress of my thinking. One naturally and sensibly shies from leaping between any kinds of systems to compare one's apples with the other's oranges. There is too big a difference between them. I would feel unsafe, fearing that perhaps, as Judith Becker wrote, musical systems really are incommensurable. But sometimes conventional wisdom should be overridden. Could I juxtapose, for example, a certain unexpected harmony in Schumann with a particular turn in a Balinese drum rhythm and ask myself to compare their effects? Can I transform the disjunctive experiences I have of these two musics, as shaped by my socially constructed apprehensions of them as belonging to distinct worlds, and turn them into a conjunctive experience in which I subsume them under the common label "music"? This requires a certain blind trust in one's personal phenomenology, a willingness to feel the feelings and ask what the connections are.