

The University of Pittsburgh Department of Music Presents

Gamelan Sunda:
The Sound of Celebration

University of Pittsburgh Gamelan

Directed by Andrew Weintraub and Jay Arms

Guest Artists: Endang Rukandi and Henry Spiller

Bellefield Hall Auditorium

April 1, 2023

8 p.m.

music.pitt.edu

Established in 1997, the Indonesian gamelan program at the University of Pittsburgh has introduced thousands of students to new ways of thinking about, practicing, performing, and composing music. Under the direction of Andrew Weintraub, students at Pitt can learn about Indonesian music and culture by participating in the gamelan, a set of predominantly percussion instruments including tuned gongs, metal-keyed instruments, and drums (as well as bowed lute, voice, and zither). The gamelan class, currently under the instruction of Jay Arms, has been offered every semester at Pitt since 1997.

Students in the gamelan class are encouraged to explore cross-cultural processes of learning as much as possible. Oral transmission of musical parts is preferred over written notation and working together as an ensemble is more important than developing individual talent. Students are also encouraged to play more than one instrument and to learn the relationships among them. Therefore, in our concerts, the musicians move from one instrument to another to put into practice what they have learned during the semester.

This evening's concert features two outstanding guest artists who are currently in residence at Pitt — Endang Rukandi is a master musician, multi-instrumentalist, teacher, and composer from Bandung, West Java, and Henry Spiller, a musician and scholar of Sundanese music and dance and founder of the gamelan program at UC Davis. During the past 25 years, over 50 guest artists from Indonesia have been invited to the university to teach, present workshops and lecture-demonstrations, and perform in concerts for the larger Pittsburgh community. This program offers Pitt students a rare opportunity to study music, dance, and theater with some of Indonesia's finest artists. The concerts not only demonstrate traditional forms of music, dance, and theater, but they also provide an opportunity for musical and theatrical experimentation. This year's concert features several arrangements and compositions created by and for the University Gamelan in collaboration with guest artists Rukandi and Spiller.

Indonesia

The modern nation of Indonesia consists of about 17,000 islands (of which a few thousand are populated), the fourth largest population

in the world, hundreds of ethnic groups, and over seven hundred languages spoken. The cultural and musical diversity of this modern island community is staggering. The University of Pittsburgh group plays music created by Sundanese people who inhabit roughly the western third of the island of Java. The approximately 49 million Sundanese make up the second largest ethnic group in Indonesia. While the majority of the population lives in rural or semi-rural settings, large cities have become increasingly central to the creation and patronage of new artistic genres, including those represented this evening.

Gamelan

In Indonesia, gamelan music is played to accompany dance, drama, puppet theater, and martial arts, as well as for concerts of listening music. Gamelan is performed for special occasions and to mark important life-cycle events. Members of the ensemble sit cross-legged on the stage floor and strike the instruments with padded mallets called *panakol*.

The University of Pittsburgh owns two gamelan sets. Each set has its own name that signifies its unique character, tuning, and localized identity. The first gamelan, which arrived in October 1995, is named "*Kyai Tirta Rukmi*," the "Venerable Rivers of Gold." Its name indicates the rivers of Pittsburgh and the gold paint on the instrument stands; of course, we're proud of the black and gold too! This gamelan is tuned to *laras salendro*, a five-tone tuning system made up of approximately equidistant intervals with a related set of instruments tune to the seven-tone *laras pelog* tuning system. The *salendro* and *pelog* scales of this gamelan share only one tone in common. The second set of instruments, which arrived in March 2005, is named "*Ligar Pasundan*," the "Fragrance of Pasundan." This name suggests that the gamelan, like the fragrance of a flower, spreads its influence far from its place of origin in the Pasundan region of West Java. This gamelan is tuned to *laras degung*, a five-tone tuning system made up of large and small intervals. This concert also features the *rabab* (spike fiddle) *suling* (bamboo flute), and *kacapi* (20-string zither) as solo instruments with the gamelan.

Each instrument in the ensemble plays one of four primary musical

functions or roles, which contribute to the rich polyphonic layering or strata of sound. The “structural melody,” usually played on the metal-keyed instruments, constitutes the basic underlying melodic foundation for each piece. “Elaboration,” played on the *gambang* (xylophone), and *bonang* (small kettle gongs on a rack), refers to melodic variation and ornamentation based on the structural melody. “Punctuation,” played on the large and small hanging gongs and *kenong* (large kettle gongs on a rack), refers to the temporal marking of important points in the rhythmic cycle. Finally, the “time-keeping” function is realized by the drummer, who signals the beginning and ending of pieces, directs tempo changes, and controls the dynamics of the music.

Program

1. *Bendrong — Gunungsari — Bendrong*

In the *kliningan* (“listening music”) repertoire, pieces are strung together to form a suite. These suites include pieces with contrasting formal, rhythmic, and modal characters. “*Bendrong*” and “*Gunung Sari*” are played in different tuning systems (*salendro* and *pelog*, respectively), and have different temporal structures. In “*Gunung Sari*,” the large gong is struck infrequently, whereas in “*Bendrong*,” the large gong is struck frequently.

2. *Ladrak — Catrik*

Gamelan *degung* was created for local Sundanese regents (*bupati*) of West Java during the early 20th century. These regents administered the Dutch cultivation system (Cultuurstelsel) for the province of West Java. Regents promoted the performing arts for the entertainment of their families and other aristocrats of the Dutch colonial state. In its classic pre-independence form, gamelan *degung* is entirely instrumental and features the melodic improvisations of the *suling*.

3. *Sulanjana — Sampak Kulu-Kulu Barang*

Sulanjana originates from in the repertory of *ketuk tilu* (a social dance form), here presented as an instrumental piece for listening. The melodies and drumming evoke refined dance motions that listeners familiar with Sundanese classical dance may recognize. At the signal from the drummer, the musicians transition to *Sampak*, a performance style in which the drummer leads the musicians through changes in tempo and dynamics to create a feeling of excitement.

4. *Windshear* Paul Brienza

This piece is an excerpt of an original composition by Pitt Senior Paul Brienza, who constructed a new metallophone instrument and designed a tuning partially inspired by his time playing with the University of Pittsburgh Gamelan.

5. *Sweet Talking* Efiq Zulfiqar

Sweet Talking is a composition that was originally recorded by the Bandung-based band SambaSunda, known for its adventurous exploration of many styles of music including Sundanese gamelan. This composition appears on the 1998 recording *Sundabali*, which featured traditional Sundanese pieces and new compositions arranged for Balinese gamelan instruments. Endang Rukandi performed on the original recording of this piece, and Pitt graduate student Hirdzan Maulana, also a musician of SambaSunda, created this arrangement for the University Gamelan.

Intermission

1. *Layar* Hirdzan Maulana

This piece is a collaboration between Endang Rukandi and Hirdzan Maulana, who are reunited for this concert after thirteen years since their last meeting.

2. *Paksituwung — Panglima*

“*Paksituwung*” (“Bird in Flight”) is one of the “large” pieces in the Sundanese gamelan repertoire. There are 64 beats within each rhythmic cycle, which gives the “elaborating” instruments, such as the *gambang* (xylophone), *rabab* (spike fiddle), and *suling* (bamboo flute) more room to improvise. *Panglima* is a classical piece that extends the improvisation into contrasting tonal areas.

3. *Warung Pojok* H. Abdul Adjib

Warung Pojok is a famous popular song throughout Indonesia. It was composed by H. Abdul Adjib, a master of Tarling arts of the Cirebon region of West Java. *Warung Pojok* roughly translates to “café on the corner,” and the lyrics in the Sundanese language describe the scene of the *warung* in question. Today *Warung Pojok* is widely beloved across Indonesia, and one can find renditions in myriad styles and genres, including pop, jazz, and gamelan *salendro*.

4. *Renggong Buyut*

Renggong Buyut is another piece of gamelan *degung* music in the *klasik* style. Here we feature some of the University students who studied *suling* with Endang Rukandi leading up to this concert.

5. *Rampak Kendang*

“*Rampak*” refers to a Sundanese performance practice in which many instruments or voices play or sing together in unison. In this case, the *kendang* (drums) execute a tightly choreographed sequence of patterns composed by Sundanese composer and gamelan teacher Undang Sumarna. Sumarna is among the first Indonesian musicians to teach gamelan in the United States. Sumarna began teaching at the University of California Santa Cruz in 1976 and developed these patterns as a pedagogical tool to lead his students to more advanced dance-drumming techniques.

6. *Matahari Terbit (Sunrise)* Endang Rukandi

Our concert concludes with an original composition by guest artist Endang Rukandi. *Matahari Terbit* was composed while Rukandi was still in high school and is offered here as a celebration of gamelan and Indonesian music.

Gamelan Musicians: Jack Agnew, Ethan Aristanto, Serena Arnold, Ella Battistelli, Ethan Baum, Jackson Berlin, Paul Brienza, Jacqueline Colmenares, Jacob Fisher, Hirdzan Maulana, Ruben Pawar, Danielle Payne, Joseph Stuter, Keira Wood, Jiayin Yang.

Directors: Andrew Weintraub, Jay M. Arms

Guest Artists: Endang Rukandi, Henry Spiller

Endang Rukandi is a master of the regional music of West Java, Indonesia. The son of a village musician, Endang's first performance leading a gamelan, or traditional Indonesian music ensemble, was in the second grade. Since then, he has studied music at two of Indonesia's foremost art universities (ISBI Bandung and ISI Denpasar) and has taught gamelan in Indonesia and the United States. He has played with internationally recognized music groups such as SambaSunda and Jugala in music festivals in countries including Egypt, Japan, Australia, China, Singapore, the US, and the UK. He currently leads the group Gamelan Eruna in Morro Bay, California and teaches gamelan at the University of California at Davis.

Henry Spiller is an ethnomusicologist whose research focuses on Sundanese music and dance from West Java, Indonesia. He is interested particularly in investigating how individuals deploy music and dance in their personal lives to articulate ethnic, gender, and national identities. He has studied Sundanese music and dance for almost five decades, and he has conducted fieldwork in Bandung, West Java, on many occasions. He is currently a Professor of Ethnomusicology at the University of California at Davis and performs regularly with the California based gamelan *degung* group *Pusaka Sunda*.

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