



(LYRCD 7179)

GAMELAN MUSIC OF BALI  
GAMELAN ANGKLUNG AND GAMELAN GONG KEBYAR  
RECORDINGS AND REVISED NOTES BY RUBY ORNSTEIN  
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#### TRACKS

1. Topeng Tua – performed by Gamelan Angklung, Mas – 3:14
2. Kebyar Teruna – performed by Gunung Sari, Peliatan – 13:49
3. 3. Tabuhan Jaged – performed by Gamelan Angklung, Jineng Dalam Selatan – 7:37
4. Segara Madu – performed by Gamelan Angklung, Sayan – 3:12
5. Lagu No. 2 – performed by Gamelan Angklung, Jineng Dalam Selatan – 6:27
6. Gambang Suling – performed by Gamelan Gong Kebyar, Kedis Kaja – 8:58
7. Hujan Mas – performed by Gunung Sari, Peliatan – 6:35

#### NOTES

Bali, one of the several thousand islands forming the Republic of Indonesia, has long been famous for its gamelan music. A tiny Hindu minority in a predominantly Moslem land, the Balinese enjoy a way of life filled with an incredible number of temple celebrations and life-cycle ceremonies, all of which require music.

In earlier times when the Balinese rajas still maintained splendid palaces, they supported large numbers of musicians and dancers for gamelan that belonged to their courts. Nowadays, with most palaces reduced to a mere shadow of their former magnificence, their orchestras have been pawned or sold, and musical activity is chiefly at the village level. Gamelan instruments are owned by a village, a *banjar* (a sub-section of a village), or by musicians themselves. In any case, the players form a club to regulate their activities. And, if money and leisure time are less abundant than formerly, and fewer gamelan clubs are active now than before 1940, there are still nearly 20 different kinds of gamelan in Bali. This CD is devoted to *gamelan angklung* and *gamelan gong kebyar*, which were among the most popular in the 1960s when I recorded this music.

*Gamelan angklung* is an ancient orchestra that provides music for temple festivals, cremations, and virtually every other occasion for which music is needed. Its instruments are small enough and light enough to be carried in processions. Traditionally this gamelan did not accompany dance performances, but it has been used in the south for *topéng* (masked dance drama) since at least the

mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; and it even accompanies *kebyar* dances in villages that do not own the larger *gamelan gong kebyar* and cannot afford to hire one.

Although *gamelan angklung* were originally tuned to a four-tone *sléndro* scale, a fifth tone was added to many orchestras in the north. The *gamelan gong kebyar* was developed in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to accompany the newly conceived virtuoso *kebyar* dances. This *gamelan* is tuned to a five-tone *pélog* scale. Today the ensemble accompanies contemporary *kebyar* dances as well as *topéng*, *légong*, and *baris* (an ancient warrior dance). Its repertoire also includes instrumental virtuoso pieces.

The instrumental make-up of the *gamelan gong kebyar* and *gamelan angklung* is similar --bronze-keyed metallophones (*gangsa*), tuned bronze gong kettles (*réyong*), single gongs of various sizes, two drums (*kendang*), cymbals (*céng-céng*), and bamboo flutes (*suling*). The *angklung* instruments are smaller and fewer in number (16 or so), with a total range of three octaves. *Kebyar* instruments are larger, there are twice as many, and the total range is five octaves.

Gamelan tuning is not standardized so instruments are not interchangeable. Within each gamelan, metallophones are tuned in pairs, one pitched slightly lower than the other. When both keys of a pair are struck, acoustic beats or waves (*ombak*) are produced. These beats give Balinese gamelan its characteristic shimmering sound. The conductors of the *kebyar* ensemble are the lead drummer and the lead metallophone (*ugal*) player. The conductor of the *gamelan angklung* is the lead metallophone player. The small *angklung* drums play a secondary role and can be omitted.

Ostinato form is commonly used for traditional gamelan compositions. One or more melodies of different lengths are repeated several times, and each instrumental section provides a different interpretation of the ostinato. The result is a set of simultaneous variations resulting from layers of melodies that range from simple to complex. In an *angklung* piece, the pair of metallophones at the lowest octave plays the basic melody (*pokok*), and the metallophones one and two octaves higher often embellish that melody in a simple fashion. At other times they join the *réyong* in playing *kotekan* (interlocking parts). *Kotekan* is composed of two syncopated parts that interlock to form a continuous melody based on the ostinato. Each beat is marked by the *kempli*, and the *kempur* marks the end of each phrase. The bamboo flutes float above the rest of the ensemble, playing their own versions of the melody.

In a *kebyar* ensemble, a pair of single-octave metallophones plays the *pokok* tones while a second pair, tuned an octave lower, plays every other note. The 15-keyed *ugal*, the largest metallophone, embellishes the basic melody, while the remaining pairs of 10-keyed metallophones, one and two octaves above, play *kotekan*. The *réyong* also plays *kotekan*, but often abandons that role to provide an alternate textural layer of syncopated percussive rhythms. These damped and open sounds are played on the knobs and rims of the kettles and are reinforced by the cymbals. The large gong marks the end of the ostinato melody while smaller gongs punctuate it on subsidiary beats. Gamelan music is an oral tradition. Except for the *suling* melodies, the music is not improvised. Once learned, a composition is played exactly the same way each time.

### ***Topéng Tua***

Every *topéng* performance begins with the appearance, consecutively, of several masked characters. Their dances are a prelude to the tale that will unfold, but have nothing to do with its plot. One of these characters is an old (*tua*) man. His attempts to move rapidly result in stumbles and near collapse, provoking laughter from the audience. He regains his balance and rests for a moment, taking several deep breaths. He picks something from his mane of white hair and breaks it with his finger tips, the all-too-familiar gestures producing still more laughter.

Here a *gamelan angklung* from Mas village in south Bali plays the music that would accompany *topéng tua*. A pair of larger drums played with hands and stick replaces the small *angklung* drums. The lead drummer must watch the dancer for sudden changes in tempo. He signals the lead metallophone player who alerts the other musicians.

### ***Kebyar Teruna***

*Kebyar Teruna* is a famous north Balinese composition by Gde Manik. It is played here by the equally famous gamelan, Gunung Sari, from Peliatan village in south Bali. The word *kebyar* means a sudden flare (e.g., the striking of a match). Musically it means the initial explosive sound of all the instruments struck simultaneously. After this dramatic opening, the gamelan continues to play in typical *kebyar* style, characterized by passages in free rhythm, sudden changes in dynamic level and tempo, and ending with a flourish of glissandi.

Thus far, the dancer has not made her appearance, and she will not do so until the completion of a series of individual virtuoso passages of *kotekan* for *réyong* and metallophones. When the dance finally begins the gamelan plays a series of ostinatos that are borrowed, in form at least, from older musical repertoires. These melodies vary in length, mood, number of repetitions, style of *kotekan*, and tempo and dynamics. From time to time, the musical flow is interrupted by the *angsel* – a sudden, often syncopated stop. The *angsel* finds its visual expression especially in the movements of the dancer's eyes, hands, and feet.

### ***Tabuhan Joged***

As the title suggests, this composition is based on a melody borrowed from the repertoire of gamelan *jogéd bungbung*, a bamboo orchestra that accompanies a flirtatious dance. *Gamelan jogéd* is tuned to a five-tone *sléndro* scale, as is this *gamelan angklung* from Jineng Dalem Selatan village in north Bali. Thus few changes were needed to convert the *jogéd* piece to one for *angklung*. The *angsel* heard in this piece are typical of those used in the *jogéd* dance, but this *angklung* composition is strictly instrumental.

### ***Segara Madu***

This recording was made in the village of Sayan. The Sayan gamelan is one of the few *gamelan angklung* in south Bali that still uses the ancient instrument called *angklung*. It is a rattle made of tuned bamboo tubes set in a frame, and there is one rattle for each note of the scale. In this piece the *angklung* replace the *réyong*; the drums and *kempli* are also omitted. The *angklung* rattles are played in hoquet style, simulating the *kotekan* played by the metallophones. The metallophones play very softly at times so that the unique sound of the *angklung* can be heard clearly.

### ***Lagu No. 2***

Like many *angklung* pieces, this one has no title. It is labeled Melody No. 2 because it was the second one I recorded that day. It is performed by the same gamelan heard on track 3, and the lead drummer is also the composer. His piece follows the form of many old *angklung* pieces: a single melody, in this instance 46 beats long, is repeated several times with changes in tempo and dynamic level. The gong is struck at the end of each repetition.

### ***Gambang Suling***

This recording was made in Kedis Kaja in north Bali. Gde Merdana is the composer, head of the gamelan and lead drummer. The *Gambang Suling* melody comes from the 1956 Javanese gamelan piece of the same name by the composer, Ki Nartosabdo. The 5+3 rhythmic pattern is characteristic of the *saron* melodies of the ancient and sacred Balinese *gamelan gambang*. Merdana's *Gambang Suling* also imitates the playing style of the *gambang*, the xylophone for which the *gamelan gambang* is named.

Merdana's *Gambang Suling* was a groundbreaking composition in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; its techniques and form were innovative then and remained influential for decades. The introductory section begins with a *gegenderan*, a very lengthy passage for metallophones, and it is followed by even longer episodes for *réyong* and *kendang*. The "introduction" is so long, in fact, that it encompasses two-thirds of the entire piece. Merdana's fascination with the *réyong* is revealed in a subtle duet between *réyong* and *suling*. The *réyong* is played by a single musician. He is joined by a *suling* player, and the two quasi-soloists play the melody along with the gamelan. Even the ending is atypical: ever softer repetitions of

the final melodic phrase, still using the 5+3 pattern, gradually fade away leaving only the sound of the gong.

### ***Hujan Mas***

Gde Purana, a composer and gamelan teacher from north Bali, is the composer of this famous instrumental piece. Purana came to Peliatan village to teach *Hujan Mas* to Gunung Sari, the gamelan heard on this track. The well-known Javanese gamelan composition by the same name appears to be otherwise unrelated to Purana's *Hujan Mas*. Like *Gambang Suling*, *Hujan Mas* is based on a single melodic ostinato, but it is much more straightforward. There is a *gegendéran* for metallophones, followed by a passage for the entire gamelan. A *réyong* episode leads to the 16-beat *Hujan Mas* melody, to which the major portion of the piece is devoted. During successive repetitions, the *réyong* parts vary, sometimes doubling the metallophone *kotekan*, at other times playing on the rims or knobs, and at still other times alternating between the two techniques. It is the *réyong* variations, and particularly the syncopated passages, that make *Hujan Mas* such an exhilarating piece.

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