



(LYRCD 7408)

## **MUSIC OF BALI GAMELAN SAMAR PEGULINGAN FROM THE VILLAGE OF KETEWEL**

Recorded by Wayne Vitale

### THE TRACKS

(Detailed on the tracks can be found below)

1. Bopong - 4:32
2. Lasem - 12:21
3. Subandar Rawit - 10:11
4. Penyelah Gelar Keramas - 11:48
5. Legong Lasem - 16:08
  - a. Pengawak
  - b. Pengipuk
  - c. Pengipuk
  - d. Pesiat

### THE GAMELAN SAMAR PEGULINGAN FROM KETEWEL VILLAGE

The Island of Bali, part of the vast archipelago of Islands that make up the nation of Indonesia, has long been famed for its highly developed traditions of music and dance. Of the many forms of gamelan that exist on the island (some 20 distinct kinds have been documented among more than 1500 active groups) certainly the most widely known is the Gamelan Gong Kebyar – literally, “to burst into flame” – is the brilliant and virtuosic style that developed in the early part of this century and continues to flourish, often overshadowing the older, more sacred styles.

However, some of the richest musical treasures on the island are found in these older ensembles. Together they represent the real core or wellspring of the Balinese musical tradition, upon which the new styles have drawn their substance and spirit. This recording presents music from one of the most beautiful of such ensemble-types, known as Gamelan Semar Pegulingan. It is the gamelan of Semara, the Balinese god of love. The music dedicated to Semara resonates with his image in Balinese mythology: the ultimate expression of manis (sweet) and halus (refined) qualities. Evolved in the now-faded feudal court system of Bali, the delicate music of the Gamelan Semar Pegulingan provided entertainment for the princely rajas and their guests. As many Balinese recount, aside from the accompaniment of religious rituals, feasts and other more “public” events, a Gamelan Semar Pegulingan was often asked to play simply for the relaxation of the prince and his family, so that “their dreams would be sweetened and filled with halus images.”

Among the handful of Gamelan Semar Pegulingan that have survived the decline of the courts, the one from the village of Ketewel enjoys a special position in Bali’s music and dance traditions. Rather than a tool for princely entertainment, this orchestra has been more closely allied to religious ritual and temple celebrations. According to Jero Mangku Gede Ketewel, the priest who presides over the temple in which the instruments are stored and acts as the spiritual leader of the group, it is probably the oldest Gamelan Semar Pegulingan in Bali. Both the temple and the instruments are said to be more than 400 years old, dating from the period of the powerful Majapahit Kingdom in Java. The spiritual powers “descended directly from the gods of Gunung Semeru,” the mountain in east Java, which, together with Bali’s Gunung Agung, is the home of the gods, worshipped in thousands of Hindu temples across the island. Because of this direct relationship to the divine sources of the Balinese religion, the instruments are regarded as highly sacred. The gamelan may be played only after the proper offerings and rituals have been completed. In fact, many of the temple rituals in Ketewel revolve around this ensemble and the special music and dance repertoire it maintains.

As an illustration of the powers imbued in the bronze keys and gongs of the gamelan, Jero Mangku Gede related the following story:

“Many years ago, while the group was performing at an odalan (temple anniversary) here in Ketewel, I noticed that some of the keys of the gangsa instruments had drifted slightly in tuning. Although almost imperceptible, I thought that it was perhaps time to call on the nearby gongsmith to come to our village and file the keys, thus restoring them perfectly to their original tuning. However, even before any of the players knew of the plan to invite the gongsmith, many of them fell ill. Of course they wondered why this illness would spread so suddenly among them. At that point I told them of the plans to tune the gamelan. It became clear to us that the spirits living within the instruments had been offended, that the gamelan must not be altered in any manner whatsoever. As soon as this plan was discarded, all of the players were immediately cured.”

During the recording session, Jero Mangku – seated near the gamelan and listening attentively to the music he has heard for many decades – pointed out that the sound of the gamelan is infused with healing powers. “Hearing the sound of the kempur (the largest gong) is enough to restore one to health.”

#### THE DANCE MUSIC OF KETEWEL

The Gamelan in Ketewel is probably best known in Bali for the unique masked dance, which it accompanies, known as Sang Hyang Bidadari. This ritual dance, performed by two young women who have been specially selected and trained, is performed only at certain temple ceremonies in accordance with the Bali-Hindu calendar. A fascinating story surrounds the birth of this dance, the masks, and the accompanying music:

Until around 250 years ago, the Kingdom of Gelgel, near the present-day region of Kungkung, ruled over the entire island of Bali. Dalem Gelgel, the kingdom’s ruler, had four sons who were given domain over the district of Timbul (later known as Sukawati) in south-central Bali. The most spiritually powerful of these four princes, Ida I Dewa Agung Dalem Karna, lived in Ketewel. He practiced many forms of meditation and yoga, and was gifted as well in the performing arts of music and dance.

Once, while meditating in the temple in Ketewel, now known as Pura Payogan Agung, Dalem Karna entered an unusually deep trance. He remained in this state for nearly a month. During this time he never stirred from his position in the temple, going without food or water. (In fact, one version of the story holds that many people in the area feared he had died, and were already making plans for his cremation.) However, eventually Karna arose “still fit and energetic despite his long fast.” He then related to those around him a vision (wahyu) he had experienced during his meditation, in which he had witnessed celestial maidens performing a dance in heaven, dressed in colorful costumes. Together with the village headmen, he requested a local artisan to carve and paint nine masks to resemble the faces of the dancers he had seen. (Another version, related by Jero Mangku, maintains that the masks had already existed for hundreds of years, stored in the inner sanctum of the temple, but that no one knew how they should be performed until Karna had his dream). Music was composed according to the sound-images from his vision, and both the musicians and two young dancers were trained to perform the piece. It is known as Sang Hyang Bidadari (Dadari = celestial maidens), considered a direct gift from the gods to their village. The refined and abstract movements of this dance became the basis for the later choreography of Legong Keraton, probably the most famous of all dances in Bali.

The musicians in Ketewel in fact maintain in their repertoire four separate pieces, all closely related in musical material, which are used to accompany the Bidadari dance. They are all called by the name Subandar – Subandar Adri, Subandar Rawit, Subandar Ramping, and Subandar Gede. The importance of the particular temple ceremony determines how many of the Subandar dances will be played. This recording contains the second (and longest) of the four, Subandar Rawit.

Also contained in this recording is an excerpt from Legong Keraton, in the vision to many other groups in Bali. This allows the opportunity to hear the famous Legong dance music side by side with the Subandar selection, the oldest form of Legong in Bali. The excerpt presented is the final section known as Legong Lasem, which is divided into four movements of contrasting tempos and melodic material. Although the opening section of the Legong dance contain purely abstract choreography, the Lasem section relates a story from Balinese mythology, that of King Lasem's unrequited love for the Princess Langkesari.

The other three pieces – Bopong, Lasem (not related to Legong Lasem), and Penyelah Gelar Keramas – are all instrumental compositions, which may be played before the Sang Hyand Bidadari dance, or as interludes during the course of a temple ritual.

Lasem is the only one which makes use of the terompong and krempiyung instruments, described below. Bopong and Penyelah Gelar Keramas are arrangements of compositions by the famous I Lotring, who lived in the village of Kuta in south Bali and traveled around the island as highly respected composer and gamelan player. Both pieces bear the unmistakable elements of Lotring's style, such as the rhythmically angular and asymmetrical closing section of Bopong.

## INSTRUMENTS

The Gamelan Semar Pegulingan in Ketewel is played by 25 musicians, and is arranged in instrumental families depending on the musical function of each instrument. All the keys and gongs are made from bronze, hand-forged in Bali by the ancient and highly respected gongsmiths.

As with most other gamelan in Bali, the Semar Pegulingan of Ketewel is tuned to a five-tone scale (pelog) which is unique to that set of instruments: while all gamelan of a similar type will approximate the same scale, there is no standard of reference to bring them into exact uniformity. Another distinctive feature of the Balinese gamelan is paired tuning. In this system every tone has a corresponding partner tone on a different instrument, tuned slightly higher or lower, so that when struck together the two notes produce a pulsating or tremolo effect. Paired tuning is responsible for the shimmering quality so prominent in the sound-color of a Balinese gamelan.

The sound of the instruments in Ketewel is especially sweet, owing partly to the age of the instruments, the interval structure of the scale, and the unusually high range in which it lies (about a whole step higher than other Gamelan Semar Pegulingan).

### 1. METALLOPHONE

- a. Two gender telulas – 13 keys – used to play ornamented versions of the core melodies, introductions and lead-ins.
- b. Eight gangsa – five keys  
Four pemade – medium high octave  
Four kantilan – high octave

Used to play interlocking figuration (kotekan) and melodies.

c. Two calung – five keys, medium low octave

Play the core tones (pokok) around which the other parts are based.

d. Two jegogan – five keys, low octave

Periodically reinforce important pokok tones (often every second, fourth, or eighth calung tone).

## 2. TUNED GONGS

a. terimpong – 13 gongs suspended horizontally on a long rack, played by one musician in improvisational style, as an embellishment of the primary melodies.

b. krempiyung – 4 gongs suspended above, used for rhythmic punctuation

c. kempur and kelentong – (both tuned outside the five-tone scale), circumference 90 cm and 35 cm respectively, used to provide primary and secondary punctuation of the phrases

d. kelenang – a small hand-held gong that plays on the offbeats

## 3. INSTRUMENTS FOR RHYTHMIC ACCENTUATION

a. two kendang – two-headed wooden drums held in the la and played with the hands, which cue the other instruments and direct the tempos, dynamics, and phrasing

b. b. kajar – a small untuned gong, which accompanies the kendang rhythms

c. ceng-ceng – a set of cymbals which also follows and reinforces kendang

4. SULING – two flutes which accompany the melodies of the gender telulas

## CREDITS

Notes by Wayne Vitale.

Ketewel is located in the township of Sukawati, Gianyar district, Bali, Indonesia.

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