



(LYRCD 7456)

Gamelan of Java

VOLUME ONE: KRATON KASUNANAN

A COMMENTARY

by Sumarsam

In recent years John Noise Manis has been fulfilling a commendable commitment to provide students of gamelan and gamelan enthusiasts with the opportunity of hearing a varied range of Javanese ensembles and musical repertoire through published recordings. With the present CD the producer begins a new series on the Lyrichord label.

On this CD two gamelans of the court of Surakarta are presented: the well-known *Kyai Kaduk Manis* (*pelog*) *Manis Rengga* (*slendro*) and the historic *Kyai Lokananta* (*slendro*). Hopefully, on future recordings we can also hear the *Kyai Semar Ngigel* gamelan (the dancing Semar), the *pelog* gamelan commonly paired with *Lokananta*.

A prominent court musician and leader of the court gamelan, Warsodiningrat, informs us that *Kaduk Manis Manis Rengga* was acquired by Paku Buwana IV (r. 1788-1880) from a wealthy Chinese in Surakarta. By contrast, *Lokananta* is a much older gamelan, originating from Demak. This suggests that *Lokananta* was constructed around the 16th century. Although there is no hard evidence to support Warsodiningrat's claim, the possibility cannot be ruled out. During this period, the north coastal area experienced an economic boom and, by extension, intense cultural development. This is the period before the emergence of the Mataram kingdom (the predecessor of the courts of Surakarta and Yogyakarta) in the inland of central Java. What I find remarkable about the *Lokananta* gamelan is the physical size of the instrument—much smaller than more recent gamelans. It produces a powerful sound, similar to that of contemporary gamelans.

This recording focuses on two *genres* of the gamelan repertoire: *gendhing bonang* and *gendhing bedhaya-serimpi*. The former is here represented by two *gendhing bonang*, Babar Layar in the *pelog* scale and Laya in the *slendro* scale, while the latter is represented by the Ketawang part of the 40-minute *gendhing bedhayan* Duradasih.

Gendhing bonang is usually defined as an instrumental piece because it is performed without singing and soft-sounding instruments—*rebab*, *gender*, *gambang*, as well as vocalists, are absent in this genre. Nevertheless, a vocal melody is also embodied in *gendhing bonang*. When musicians recall its passages, they hum a vocal melody. A *gendhing bonang* is different from a *gendhing rebab* in two ways: (1) passages in *gendhing bonang* often lie in low-octave, and (2) its second section is always performed in a loudplaying style.

This CD presents two *gendhing bonang*. This is unusual for a program of a normal *klenengan* (gamelan concert). A single CD could not, of course, accommodate the entire program of a typical concert, which is two to three hours long. The producer, here and elsewhere, makes choices that do not strictly adhere to the traditional sequence of genres in a performance context. He often asks that the thickness of the gamelan texture be thinned to offer the listener a clearer sound of the gamelan. For example, the two *gendhing bonang* are performed here without the '*peking*' part. These choices are based on a desire to present a gamelan repertoire and performance style that approach the culturally-formed taste of Western listeners, especially on first encounter. I must say that excellent recording and skillful disc mastering do fulfill this aim. The two bonang pieces require patient listening. This is because the first section of the *gendhing* is composed in the most expansive *gongan* cycle. The *gongan* cycle is called "*kethuk 4 arang*," having a length which is defined by the number of the basic pulses per *gongan* cycle—in this case, 256 beats. For this length, the gong player must wait about 10 minutes to strike the gong to mark the end of the cycle.

Like *gendhings* composed in any expansive *gongan* cycle (i.e., 32, 64, 128, and 256 pulses per cycle), a *gendhing bonang* consists of two major sections, *merong* and *inggah*. The designation of *kethuk 4 arang* of the *merong* section means that the *kethuk* instrument is played four times in one *kenongan* cycle. Within the 64-pulse *kenongan*,

kethuk is played on the 8th-, 32nd-, 48th-, and 54thcount – i.e., the distance between one *kethuk* and another is 16 beats. This is an infrequent (*arang*) *kethuk* playing, hence the name of the *gongan* cycle. This differs from the *gongan* structure of the *kethuk* “*kerep*” (frequent), in which the distance between one *kethuk* and another is eight beats. Musically, the position of the *kethuk* signifies the phrasing of the melody.

The second section of the piece, the *inggah*, is called “*minggah kethuk 8*” (ascending to 8 *kethuk*). Joined by the *kempyang*, *kethuk* is played eight times within the 32-pulse *kenongan* cycle. It is the treatment of the *inggah* that gives the *gendhing boning* its special characteristics. Unlike *gendhing rebab* (except in a few instances), when a *gendhing boning* enters the *inggah* section (after a transitional moment with an acceleration in the *merong*), this section begins to settle down in a particular tempo and density level called “*irama dadi*” (*dadi* means “to be” or “to settle down”).

After the *gongan* cycle is repeated a few times, in the middle of a cycle, the ensemble, led by the drum, gradually accelerates. As the *gongan* cycle gets to the same place of the accelerated point, another acceleration takes place, bringing the piece to a fast tempo while the density level drops to half (i.e., *irama* change). At this moment the musicians treat the music in “*sesegan*” and “*soran*” (fast and loud-sounding style) in *irama* “*tanggung*.” This is the climax of any *gendhing bonang*: the intense, percussive sound of the bronze becomes the focus of the enjoyment. This is the practice which is emphasized in gamelan “*sekaten*.”

Besides the loud-playing style, there are changes in playing techniques of a few instruments: (a) the two “*demung*” play interlocking patterns, one playing on the beat, the other off; (b) the “*slenthem*,” which is heard only every other beat, plays a reductive form of the melodic skeleton in the style of the “*bonang panembung*” in *sekaten* gamelan or in Yogyakarta gamelan tradition.

Between the two *gendhing bonang*, the CD offers us a section of a larger *gendhing* that accompanies a *bedhaya* dance called Dura Dasih or Dora Dasih (meaning “deceitful love”). “*Bedhaya*” is a genre of court ceremonial dances. Performed by seven or nine female dancers, it evokes a solemn, peaceful atmosphere. The section included here is *ketawang* Kinanthi Dura Dasih, composed on the basis of “*macapat*” Kinanthi, one of the forms of sung poetry.

As the name of this dance indicates, “love” is the theme of the piece. The sung texts, especially the beginning and middle sections, connote love and eroticism. The text is composed following certain rules of *macapat* poems: a fixed number of lines per stanza, syllables per line, and end-vowel in each of the lines. Compounded with the symbolism of the text, these rules make it difficult to decipher the precise meaning. This is true for all the texts of the *gendhing*; that of *ketawang* Kinanthi Dura Dasih is particularly allusive. I was told by my gamelan teachers that actually the text of this section describes an act of sexual union. Fish, red lotus, mosses, and weed refer to private organs. A sentence such as “*kasereg roning tarate bang*” (“penetrated is the red lotus

leaf”) and “*kagyat dening iwak molah*” (“startled [is she] by the movement of the fish”) suggest a sexual act. I have never heard others interpret the text in this way.

The dance movements which this piece accompanies do not convey the message of the text. In fact, the dance in this section is not much different than other *serimpi* dances. That the meaning of the text does not necessarily relate to the meaning of the music or the dance, is a common practice in gamelan literature.

Gendhing Bedhayan DURADASIH

slendro manyura

Ketawang Kinanthi

Saya nengah denya adus, andhe

Lara laraning kinanthi

Kaserek roning tarate bang, andhe

Tinubing maruta kengis

Kagyad dening iwak molah, andhe

Amangsa kalalar keli, andhe

Ganggeng irim-irim arum

Tunjung merut kanan kering, andhe

Delegnya angrong ing sela

Lelumute angalingi, andhe

Kayu apune anamar

Kataweng unthuking warih, andhe

Kinanthi sidadal banyu

Kontal patelesan kentir, andhe

Rinangsang-rangsang tan kena

Cinandhak-candhak nginggati, andhe

Pan ginayuh-gayuh tuna

Amuyeng madyaning warih, andhe

Sun kekembang wong agung

Sun kekembang wong adi, andhe

Kenanga lan sumarsana

Argulo gambir melathi, andhe

Anrus gandaning kusuma

Baya daulating dasih

Note about translation of the Javanese text

Javanese languages are difficult to translate. It has been observed that defining their meanings is like aiming at moving targets. In our case, the difficulty is compounded, on one hand, by the fact that the text is composed following the strict rules of *mocopat* poetry, and, on the other, by the presence of metaphors or hidden meanings. For the text of *Ketawang Duradasih*, a translation, the joint effort of Adi Deswijaya, Janet Purwanto, and Rosella Balossino is offered, in addition to one by Bapak Sumarsam. (*jnm*)

As he swims closer to the middle
his sadness is washed away
how quickly the red lotus leaf moves
as though blown by the wind
startling is the movement of the fish
washing the grime in the current

The fragrant flower of the water weed
the lotus flower drifts to the right and left
the fish hides in a slit between stones
obscured by the moss
the betel vine barely visible
concealed by the bubbles in the water

Carried away by the current
the piece of cloth is flung from side to side
as it is washed away
he tries to grab it but it is out of reach
he tries to catch it but it dodges away
though he tries to grasp it, he will not succeed
it spins round and round in the water

I am the symbol of a great man
I am the symbol of one who is highly esteemed
the flowers of the ylang-ylang and gardenia plants
argulo, gambir, jasmine, the ever fragrant flowers
who is she

The one who bathes gradually moves to the middle
Kinanthi song of the sensation of pain
Penetrated is the red lotus leaf
The wind blows, exposing [the red lotus] a little
Startling is the movement of the fish
Devouring the floating residue

The fragrance of *irim-irim* weed is sweet
The lotus flower drifts to left and right
A large fish hides [in-between] the stones
The mosses conceal it
The weed disappears
Hidden in the water foam

Kinanthi song of those to be washed by water
Swallowed by floating watery cloth
Trying to grab it, yet to no avail
Trying to reach it, yet to be missed

Trying to attain it, yet unsuccessful
Circling the middle of water

I am the flower of a great man
I am the flower of an esteemed man
As the flowers of *kenanga* and *cempaka* plant,
Rose, *gambir* flowers, and jasmine
Penetrating is the fragrance of the venerable one
Causing my feeling of love to arouse

*Born in East Java, **Bapak Sumarsam** received formal gamelan education and grew up as musician in Surakarta (Central Java). He is Adjunct Professor and former Chair of the Music Department at Wesleyan University (Middletown, CT) and an internationally renowned gamelan musician. He conducts workshops and concerts throughout the world. He has written "Gamelan - Cultural Interaction and Musical Development in Central Java," University of Chicago Press, 1995.*

Track 1 (21:15) **Gendhing bonang BABAR LAYAR** pelog lima. Kyai Kaduk Manis
Track 2 (20:51) **Ketawang Bedhayan DURADASIH** slendro manyura. Kyai Lokananta
Track 3 (23:21) **Gendhing bonang LAYA** slendro nem. Kyai Manis Rengga

TOTAL TIME: 65:27

Track 1 Gendhing bonang
BABAR LAYAR
pelog lima: Kyai Kaduk Manis

Track 2 Ketawang Bedhayan
DURADASIH
slendro manyura: Kyai Lokananta

Track 3 Gendhing bonang
LAYA
slendro nem: Kyai Manis Rengga

The gamelan Kyai Kaduk Manis/Manis Rengga is played at the front of the main pendopo Sasono Sewoko. The gamelan Kyai Lokananta is played inside the pavillion Androvino.

Pesindhèn (female singers):
GRAY Koes Murtiyah
Nyi Lr. Cendaniraras (Mulyani)
Nyi Lr. Maduraras (Mujinah)

Nyi Lr. Puspitoraras (Suparni)

Rebab:

M. Suraji, S. Kar. M. Sn. [Duradasih]

Kendhang/Penunthung:

R. Ng. Pandoyopangrawit (Sukarno)

Gender barung:

M. Ng. Karnopangrawit (Sukarno)

Gender penerus:

M. Ng. Mulyopangrawit (Bedjo Hardjomulyono)

Bonang barung:

R. Ng. Drs. Harsodiprojo

Bonang penerus:

M. Ng. Hadipangrawit (Hadimino) [Duradasih]

M. Ng. Reksopangrawit (Katimin) [Laya, Babar Layar]

Slentem:

R. Ng. Gunodiprojo (Susanto)

Demung I:

R. Ng. Projopangrawit (Joko Daryanto, S.Sn.)

Demung II:

R. Ng. Warsodiprojo (Suwardi) [Laya, Babar Layar]

Saron I:

RT. Hastodipuro, S. Kar. (Tri Hastotomo) [Duradasih]

M. Ng. Hadipangrawit (Hadimino) [Laya, Babar Layar]

Saron II:

R. Ng. Warsodiprojo (Suwardi) [Duradasih]

M. Ng. Brotopangrawit (Sumarno) [Laya, Babar Layar]

Saron penerus (peking):

M. Ng. Daryopangrawit (Kadaryadi) [tacit on Laya and Babar Layar]

Gambang:

M. Sugiyanto, S. Sn.

Gong/Kempul:

M. Ng. Madyopangrawit (Sumadi)

Kenong:

M. Ng. Subektyopangrawit (Slamet)

Kethuk:

M. Ng. Brotopangrawit (Sumarno) [Duradasih]

M. Lr. Lasmopangrawit (Lasiman) [Laya, Babar Layar]

This CD represents the first in a series of recordings of Javanese gamelan music curated and produced by John Noise Manis for Lyrichord. The obligatory setting for the most refined tradition of gamelan playing style and beauty of sound is the Kraton (royal palace) of Surakarta.

While a recording cannot re-create the live context of a Javanese gamelan performance, nor its cultural context, it does have the advantage of highlighting musical expressions

and sonic qualities of carefully selected programs that may be enjoyed by a vast public. The concept of this series aims to place Javanese gamelan in the context of universal music.

This initial CD presents two instrumental works, gendhing bonang, and a third from the Kraton ancient dance repertoire. The booklet includes commentary by Bapak Sumarsam, the eminent Indonesian musicologist and musician, long-time resident of the United States. It also includes two intriguing translations of the Ketawang text.

Recordings made on June 29, 2007, with the gracious permission of Princess Dra. G.R.Ay. Koes Murtiyah (Gusti Mung)

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