

LISTENING TO AN EARLIER JAVA

To
Rebecca and Rainer, my source
Benjamin and Samuel, my sustenance
Tony, my life and love

Cover: Photographs of Ibu Pringga taken by the author.

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LISTENING TO AN EARLIER JAVA

*Aesthetics, gender, and the music of wayang
in Central Java*



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A CD-ROM (compatible for Mac or PC) with musical examples and transcriptions of *grimingan* in each *pathet* is included with this book. The introduction and contents of the CD-ROM can be found on the CD-ROM itself.

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INTRODUCTION

Preliminary soundings

- 1 Surat and Senu were in the prayer house, intoning the call to *subuh* prayers, their voices tuneful
in a Banten-style melody, crystal clear,
asalatu kerun min anum echoed forth.¹
- 2 At the end of the *adan* everyone prayed,
all the *santri* prayed,
the elderly and the poorer *santri*.
Jayengraga signalled for the introduction to the prayer.
- 3 Right after the exhortation to prayer Jayengraga began what was necessary,
usali parelas
subeki, accompanied by the usual prayer movements,
ada-an imaman lillahi tangala.
- 4 Then *Allahu akbar kabiran alkamdu*
lillahi kasiran
wa subkanallah bukratin
wa asilan, followed by the reading of the *patekah*.

¹ This passage from the *Serat Centhini* bears witness to the Islamic nature of Javanese culture in the early nineteenth century. It also demonstrates how foreign words, no less than the sounds of the natural and physical world, are seamlessly incorporated into the poetic sound play of Javanese literary poetry. These verses would themselves have been sung and the singer's voice would have brought to aural life the sound of the Arabic phrases of worship as well as the utterings of the birds and beasts, and the creaks and groans of the mechanical world. The Arabic words '*asalatu kerun min anum*' in verse 1, 'prayer is better than sleep', come from the early morning recitations performed at *subuh*, the first of five offerings of prayer during the day in Islamic worship. Similarly, the Javanized Arabic words in verses 3-4 come from Arabic prayers familiar to nineteenth-century Javanese Muslims. In verse 5, reference is made to *patekah*, the opening chapter of the Koran and, with the words '*pan ina anjalna*', to the popular koranic chapter Sura 97. The *Surat Watini* mentioned in verse 5 is a Javanese version of the koranic *sura* known as 'The Fig'. In verse 6, the *kunut* is a special litany read in the middle of the second unit of the morning prayer after bowing and standing. Finally, the *tahyat* is the greeting one says while kneeling. In verse 7, both *dikir* and *slawatan* refer to personalized recitation and prayers performed outside of the standard worship order, the latter usually performed in groups with frame-drum accompaniment.

- 5 After the recitation of the *patekah*,
pan ina anjalna.
 At the end of the *patekah*
 the *Surat Watini* was read.
- 6 Then they prostrated themselves and stood up while reciting the *kunut*,
 and prostrated themselves with two enunciations of the *tahyat*,
 in a calm and orderly manner.
 Then they gave their final *salam* followed by praises to God.
- 7 The voices were all evenly pitched, enticingly melodious,
 all over the village,
 some were together, some on their own,
 some still reciting *dikir*, and some already singing *slawatan*.
- 8 Others were already reciting their Arabic lessons with a resounding buzz,
 others were still summoning the faithful to prayer.
 The sounds of the prosperous, beautiful village,
 mingled with the squeak-squeak of men shouldering their loads to market.
- 9 For at the time of *subuh* the entire village awoke,
 everyone getting to work,
 waking up they got out of bed
 to peddle busily things to eat or go to market.
- 10 Some ground meal with a crunch-crunch, while those who smelted,
 the instrument makers and copper smiths,
 were not silent day or night,
 giving pleasure to the prosperous village.
- 11 So that it seemed that at *subuh*, all the voices
 awakened the dawn,
 together with the farm animals making noise,
 the horses, the water buffaloes, the cows, ducks and chickens.
- 12 The peacock sounded *nyangungong* and the doves cooed,
 as did the Bengal wood doves,
 and the fly catcher [*sikatan*] sang *cinggoling*,
 and in the trees the lady cuckoo [*kolik*] sang out merrily.
- 13 Her mate loudly answered from the *waringin* tree again and again,
 the *colak* bird was sung to by the *kreyak* bird,
 the *kuthilang* answered the *kedhasih* bird,
 the green parakeet and the starling gave answers to the mynah and the golden
 oriole
- 14 Their voices in commotion, the sounds of the birds mingled
 with the voices of those who were praying.

It seemed as if the birds helped
those who were praying as well as those who were selling sweetcakes.²

Serat Centhini Canto 44 verses 1-14

This passage from the early nineteenth-century poem, the *Serat Centhini* (circa 1814), recounts the early morning activities of the residents of a Central Javanese village. It so happens that the day will be an auspicious one since it will be marked by the final preparations for an important wedding in the home of one of the village chiefs. In the verses cited above, however, anticipation of the frenzy of activities particular to the day cannot yet be felt. The early morning routines of village life are described in detail: *subuh* prayers are recited, sellers head to market, smithies begin work at their forges, breakfast peddlers amble through neighbourhoods offering sweet cakes, birds and domestic animals attend to their morning ablutions while chattering to their mates. What is striking about these verses is the evocation of the sound world of a Javanese dawn. Prayerful voices are tuneful or melodious. The buzzing of the voices reciting Arabic lessons mingles with the squeaking of the yokes of the merchants heading to market. The repetitive sounds of work such as the grinding of meal or the smelting of ore accompany the conversations of animals and the twittering solicitations of birds – onomatopoeically experienced through the text which would itself have been sung out loud. The articulation of sounds propels the reader through the narrative in the same way that the interactions of the sounds in the early morning urge the Javanese villagers on with their morning activities.

Although they portray the dawning of a day in nineteenth-century Java, the verses quoted above describe an aural experience that will seem familiar to anyone who has recently awakened at daybreak in Central Java, even in the midst of an urban twentieth-century *kampung* or neighbourhood. Of course, one needs to imagine the addition of the rumblings of motorcycles and trucks, the monologic contributions of electronically conveyed and amplified sounds, the preening calls of grumpy urban roosters, the snorts and splashes of nearby morning baths, and the cries of children heading off to national schools.

An intense focus on the sound of the world is characteristic of Javanese culture even today, at least in the areas of Central Java with which I am familiar. Almost more than visual experience, Javanese tend to use sound to connect themselves to the world around them. Hearing about an event is at least as good as being there, in part because it allows for copious comment and critique that was not possible at the original event, but also because the ver-

² All translations from the *Serat Centhini* are by Tony Day unless otherwise indicated.

bal re-enactment of the event is often presented with accurate, direct quotes and amusing sound effects. The Javanese language is filled with surprisingly effective onomatopoeic words. Conversations are often liberally sprinkled with words newly created to capture the real or imagined aural experience of a particular moment or action. 'Glup' was the word one person used to describe to me the experience of losing her glasses into a well. The word expressed both the sound of the glasses falling, irretrievably, into the water far below and the surprise and resigned acceptance she felt.

Many of the names of instruments in Javanese musical ensembles are taken from the sounds the instruments make. *Kodhok ngorek*, or frogs croaking, describes both a fifteenth-century musical ensemble still used in the Javanese royal courts and the one piece that is played on the instruments. The basic melody, which also in part defines the structure of the piece, suggests the metrical, if occasionally syncopated, pattern created when frogs call to one another in the channels of rice paddies or in urban gutters after a torrential rain. Even without verbal re-enactment, a sound itself can be communicative and worthy of comment. Once, at a music lesson in which I was recording the accompaniment for the vocal piece *Jineman Glathik Glinding*, the musicians came to one of the several composed stops in the flow of the piece. As they played the last note of the phrase, an itinerant peddler unknowingly chimed in with his characteristic jangle of a fork against a plate that happened to resonate at precisely the same pitch. Hilarious laughter and repeated imitations of the coincidentally sonorous event ensued.

The cacophony of the Javanese world can be overwhelming to some, yet it is highly valued by most Javanese people. The aural atmosphere of the preparation for any kind of celebratory event should be *ramé*, or bustling and lively (in Javanese). Multiple sound sources are integral to the creation of the *keraméan* (*keramaian*, Indonesian) of the moment, including the combined airing of heavily amplified radio or cassette music – often from several sources, impromptu speeches, the sounds of hawkers, the increasingly organized sounds of multiple groups of musicians as they set up and prepare to perform. Traditional Javanese gamelan music, or *karawitan*, is itself aurally *ramé* in the sense that there are many musical events happening simultaneously in the texture of the music. The listener's ear is not drawn primarily to one predominant melody and then to the accompaniment. The same can be said of wayang kulit or shadow puppet performances in which the voice of the puppeteer, or *dhalang*, can be alternately dominantly strident or mellifluously intertwined with the subdued sounds of the accompanying ensemble, only to be suddenly drowned out when he calls for a dramatic increase in musical volume. Most *dhalang* prefer to have some musical accompaniment playing at all times.

The visitor to Central Java might be surprised that in a postcolonial,

modernized society with a sizeable urban middle-class interactively linked to the internet, MTV, and other new media, rife with political, economic, and cultural turmoil and change, a performance art with roots reaching back to the twelfth century and beyond can draw cheering enthusiastic crowds numbering in the thousands, most of whom would only be able to hear, not see, the performance. A wayang performance is generally an all night affair. The *dhalang* is the primary performer throughout most of the eight-hour event. He controls the flow of the performance while seated behind a light source and screen onto which he casts the shadows of puppets while telling the story chosen for the evening – often one crafted with reference to Javanese versions of the Indic Mahabharata and Ramayana. The *dhalang* punctuates his narrative with plot diversions, advice to local characters – businessmen, the hosts of the events, his own musicians, local and national dignitaries – and tangential philosophical musings all to the constant accompaniment of music that in the past consisted of a traditional Central Javanese gamelan and, now, might consist of a gamelan with the incorporation of new instruments and, often, other Javanese musical ensembles.

When I arrived in the bustling yet paradoxically sleepy Central Javanese city of Surakarta, also known as Solo, in June of 1990, I expected to spend my time determining what was particularly female about an obscure musical style generally referred to as ‘the female style’ and used as part of the accompaniment for what is referred to as old-style wayang, a performance style that was in decline in the 1990s. The women and, occasionally, men who performed in ‘the female style’ did so on an instrument called a *gender*, a kind of metallophone with thirteen or fourteen bronze keys suspended over resonators, an instrument with a luscious, deep, murmuring yet resonant sound and an illustrious reputation as one of the premier instruments in the Central Javanese gamelan ensemble. I had anticipated that my contribution to Javanese music studies would be the description and analysis of a style of performance that had, to that point, only been analysed in a student paper by the scholar-musician Suratno, while my theoretical contribution would be to the burgeoning discourse on gender and music and the comparative work of Ellen Koskoff and others. Instead, as I met people who knew about the wayang traditions associated with ‘the female style’ of accompaniment and began to attend performances, I came to realize that I was actually investigating a musical tradition that was felt by some to be able to invoke through sound alone the emotional and dramatic force of an entire wayang performance. Not too far into my research, I realized that this project was much more than an exercise in preservationist ethnomusicology. Instead, I was probing at the heart of what connects contemporary Javanese wayang performance’s presents to its multiple pasts.

Up to this point I have been speaking about Java in a nearly monolithic

manner, as though the performing arts of this heavily populated island are similar everywhere. This could not be further from the truth. Even within the confines of the relatively small area known as Central Java, there are myriad interpretations and variants on performance genres such as gamelan and wayang kulit. While many of these variants have derived from idiosyncratic habits and inventions of renowned performers, they are quickly absorbed into the Central Javanese discourse on style as local area traditions, living on well beyond the performing days of the instigating artists. That said, there are certain elements that link the many local wayang traditions, some of which are described in this chapter.³

The performance style with which I am most concerned is now called old-style wayang. The term 'old style' itself engages in a kind of erasure of older local variation as it was certainly practiced, since the Javanese who use the term usually imply that it was once the style in which everyone used to perform in the Surakarta-Klaten area of Central Java, north and east of Yogyakarta.⁴ It is probable that temporal distance has blurred the local differences that once existed, but everyone who refers to old-style wayang from the Surakarta-Klaten area concurs as to the elements that are particular to it, including the musical accompaniment. Still performed occasionally in the twenty-first century, the old style itself was probably most current during the first fifty years of the twentieth century. That said, most of the performers with whom I worked had learned from teachers who, themselves, learned from artists whose careers encompassed the last fifty years of the nineteenth century. These connections indicate some kind of continuity in performance practice for the tradition reaching back at least as far as the mid-nineteenth century. After the nineteen fifties, musical and thematic innovations from *dhalang* such as Ki Nartosabdho and new phenomena such as famous *dhalang* reaching a regional and national audience aided by the rise of radio and recording technology significantly altered the soundscape of Central Javanese wayang performance. Javanese traditions, however, seem to allow a layering of new performance possibilities onto older traditions without their obliteration or obsolescence, resulting in multiple, contemporaneous, hybrid forms, a method of change that may well have been going on in Java for centuries.

Given the importance of sound in Javanese culture and the nearly constant presence of music in the myriad forms of Javanese performance – new and old – this should not have been surprising. Yet, the soundscape of Javanese

³ Jan Mrázek's edited collection, *Puppet theatre in contemporary Indonesia* (2002), provides the reader with a sense of the multitude of local styles and some of their diachronic and synchronic interconnections.

⁴ The area of Yogyakarta has its own old style of wayang and musical accompaniment that has been described by Tim Byard-Jones in his PhD thesis (1997).

culture in general, and wayang kulit in particular, has been virtually ignored in the large scholarly literature produced since the end of the nineteenth century that has focused instead on the history, literature, language usage, and colonial constructions of Javanese wayang, as well as the anthropological manifestations of the presence and performative power of the *dhalang* or puppeteer.

The sound that is at the centre of this study – female-style *gender* performance – is, ironically, unlikely to capture the attention of even the most attentive observer, although it would have been slightly more prevalent in the days prior to the amplification of the *dhalang*'s voice. At its loudest, when struck vigorously with two padded mallets, the bronze slabs of the *gender* create a resonant reverberation rather like a muted vibraphone. Located directly behind the *dhalang* during a wayang performance, the murmurings of the *gender* with its polyphonic melodic passages and modal gestures are really part of a private conversation with the *dhalang* – gently reminding him of the pitches he may need as he prepares his next song, keeping the *rasa* or mood of the scene in his mind and helping him to evoke that *rasa* in the ears and hearts of the listeners.

Conversations with musicians and *dhalang* made it abundantly clear that the female style of *gender* performance is the same as 'old' and 'village' styles of performance and that the style had been gender-neutral as recently as the middle of the twentieth century. Understanding the style of performance as old, rather than as female, changes the way in which it can be heard. As a female style it is easy for Javanese listeners to adopt local stereotypes about things that are gendered female and hear the style as a diluted, undereducated, unrefined derivative form of the male-dominated, urban court style performance. In hearing the style as coming from the village, similar stereotypical assessments hold. Oldness, implying continuity with some aspect of Javanese history in any way, is generally revered. Thus, understanding the style as old immediately changes local assessments of the value of the style and, because of the parallel association with femaleness and rural life, simultaneously creates problems for Javanese listeners based on their assumptions about the complicated relationships between oldness, refinement, learnedness, and maleness and the Central Javanese urban courts as source for all of these attributes and practices.

The sound of the female or old style of musical accompaniment serves as an aural bridge between the performance styles of today and a style of performance that reaches as far back as the middle of the nineteenth century in terms of musical continuity. As I will argue in due course, female *gender* sounds also resonate with Javanese aesthetic traditions that can be rediscovered in the first written Javanese interpretation of the Bharatayuddha – the story of the final battle between the two warring families of the Indic Mahabharata.

On the problems of being there: fieldwork at Central Javanese events

Anthropologists and ethnomusicologists find themselves in a conundrum when they try to maintain both their commitment to poststructuralist and postcolonial thinking and the traditional forms of ethnographic process in which they engage and believe. It is difficult to evade a seeming arrogance when claiming to represent or speak for persons other than oneself. There is the inevitable exoticization of 'subjects' about whom one writes and the hegemony invoked by the word 'author' itself with which to contend. The desire to avoid these pitfalls is thwarted at every turn by the simple fact that close documentation, analysis, and interpretation of local and historical perspectives is the only reasonable way to proceed. One must either manoeuvre between the Scylla and Charybdis of fieldwork and representation or forego any further inquiry.

My solution to the problems inherent in the process of representation and interpretation in this study involves avoiding a monologic exegesis. I have endeavoured to include extensive quotation from Javanese sources, oral and written, historical and contemporary as well as from my own field notes and analysis journals. The presence of these texts allows for others to reinterpret both my own experiences and my representations of Javanese interpretation. More important, I make no claims to providing the definitive description of 'Javanese wayang'. Rather, I describe one particular style of wayang and some of its accompaniment, as practiced by a small, but representative if diminishing, group of performers in Central Java who harbour strong feelings about the significance of what they do. The strength of their commitment to the centrality of the performance aesthetics of old-style wayang, striking correspondences found in Javanese literary sources, as well as supportive material found in scholarly research and my own musical and cultural analysis have convinced me that it is possible to use an interpretation of this style of wayang kulit and its accompaniment to listen back into the aesthetics of an earlier Java. This study intersects with historical ethnomusicological studies such as Shelemay's (1980) work on Falasha liturgy, Sapoznik's (1999) work on Klezmer, and Wong's (2001) work on Thai *wai khruu* in that it uses present musical practice as a lens through which to imagine, interpret, and 'hear' past musical culture and aesthetics.

The hurly-burly of fieldwork in Java devours a person. The sheer physical effort of travelling is nearly overwhelming for Javanese and foreigners alike. The traversing of the inevitably long distances to chosen performances in the heat and extraordinary traffic that hurtles from one side of Central Java to the other, the inhaling of lungfuls of carbon monoxide-laden exhaust that swirls around inside the hermetically sealed bus and taxi compartments in which one usually travels, and the extreme sport of hanging on to the outside of the

packed-to-capacity-last-possible bus to a particular village are tremendously exciting but leave a person breathless, literally and figuratively. On the other hand, this form of travel allows for true participant observation and an embodied experience of Javanese fatalism in the regular communal calculation of the centimetres that will remain between your vehicle and the wobbling truck careening down the wrong side of the road whose driver has no intention of either slowing down or moving over until he passes the oxen cart travelling in front of him. Much deep sighing, mutterings of prayers, tsk-tsking, and wiping of brows occurs after the suspense of the approaching truck has passed only to well up again with the next life-threatening roadway adventure.

The temporary bonding effect of mortal fear does little to mediate the relentless need to have on one's public face in Java. Unlike life in big cities around the world, it is not possible to be anonymous on a bus in rural Java. The endless rounds of polite head noddings and circular conversations about where one has been or is going and the possibility of distant relatedness through mutual friends and relations is a constant for all travellers in Java. After all of this, unless one has been specially invited, upon arrival one has still to negotiate permission to record the performance to which one has so arduously travelled. The process of this negotiation requires subtle attention to the *rasa* of the event as one reads it at the moment.

The Javanese word *rasa* (feeling, taste, emotion) maintains multiple meanings ranging from its association with Javanese Tantric and Islamic enlightenment and mysticism to mundane bodily and emotional sensations. It can refer to the overall feeling of an event or moment and it is frequently used in recountings to describe an individual's experience of an event in Central Java. From a musician's perspective, if he meets an enemy or if the musicians with whom he is playing are not in good form or not reasonably capable, he might describe the event by saying that the *rasa* of the event was less than good. On the other hand, especially for a host family, the arrival an unexpected guest or an infrequently met friend, the confluence of good moods and good music can render the experience as one with a positive *rasa*. Working with this basically positive construction of the arrival of an unexpected foreigner, I managed to suppress my sense of being an intruder to Javanese events, regularly arriving at wayang events in order to record *gender* players whom I hoped would perform.

Arriving at the already bustling performance space alone, I caught sight of the *dhalang* sitting in an open doorway laughing with one of the musicians. I observed that the hosts were on the east side of the space near the front of the screen. I stopped walking, wondering whether I should go through the awkward process of introducing myself to the host, explaining my unexpected arrival, and asking permission to record the performance – tape recorders and other research paraphernalia hanging off me at all angles in an overt anticipation of his approval. By

the time I had finished this internal debate, the *dhalang*, noticing my tentativeness, had begun walking towards me. He raised his eyebrows in the direction of the host's family, signalling that I should follow him. He greeted the father of the family with an open smile. The host, eager to help the *dhalang*, also smiled with an easy composure and reached his hand out to me. The *dhalang* introduced me as part of his extended family: Sarah from America who was documenting his performances for research. The host welcomed me and urged me to enjoy the performance and to record as much as I wanted. He asked me, hopefully, if I would also be performing. I declined, apologized, and turned to the *dhalang* awaiting his direction. Smiling and with an avuncular manner, the *dhalang* invited me to join the performers to eat something before I went to set up my equipment. (Sarah Weiss 2 July 1991: field notes.)

With its emphasis on the process of life – one's own and that of the others around one – fieldwork induces an intoxicating, presentist focus that tends to obscure the historical significance of what one experiences and learns. Indeed, the realization that I was studying an 'old' tradition and that the gendering of the style was a relatively new phenomenon came only gradually as I began to spend less time rushing to all-night performances and more time in quiet discussion at the homes of musicians and in thinking about the information and sounds I had recorded. The interviews I had with many *gender* players and *dhalang* often extended beyond three hours, occasionally including a light meal or extensive snacks, and covered many aspects of performance in Java. Sharp critical assessments of the skills and talents of various musicians and puppeteers performing in Central Java and hushed commentary on the machinations of Indonesian national political events peppered in-depth discussion and heated debate on old-style wayang and *gender* performance. Conversation often centred on the assumed linear relationship between the 'refined,' more restrained, music theory-informed urban and court styles and the coarser, more emotional, less-developed in terms of music theoretical knowledge, village styles. The word *rasa* was regularly used to evaluate the performance characteristics of each style: the restraint and learned clarity of the urban interpretations and the emotional exuberance of the village performances.

Refinement, restraint, rules, and 'rasa': music and politics in Central Javanese courts

The reality of the dynamic nature of Central Javanese wayang performance is obscured by the common construction – by Javanese and non-Javanese scholars and performers alike – of the contemporary urban court style of wayang and *karawitan* or gamelan music performance in general as 'ancient' and 'pure,' the *ur*-form that has gradually been diluted, derogated, and distorted through

village and other alternative performance traditions. In the mid-eighteenth century the courts now associated with high art and urban Central Javanese performance traditions were but young upstart polities. Newly in power they were in the business of making themselves regal. They set about borrowing traditions including dance, music, metallurgy, fashions among many others from older cultural centres in East and West Java whose political power had diminished due to political and religious conquest (Carey 1999:270-82).

Over time, in pursuit of profit and power, the Dutch colonial authority shifted its focus from the northern coastal regions of the island to the courts of Central Java. By 1830, at the end of the Dipanegara War, the Dutch had managed to insert themselves into each of the four Central Javanese courts (two of which they themselves helped to create) to such an extent that they had effectively placed puppet rulers on each throne. Javanese participated in this gradual usurpation by the Dutch for a variety of reasons. Important for even the compromised legitimacy of the rulers of these courts was the idea that the Central Javanese courts were old and their traditions ancient. This was also convenient for the Dutch colonialists for many reasons, not least because of their endeavours to trace the roots of Javanese culture safely in ancient Indic, as opposed to threateningly contemporary Islamic, culture. Confirming the ancientness of the courts and their traditions enhanced the value of Javanese culture for Dutch administrators, philologists, and theosophists who were interested in connecting their colonial realm to the roots of a great Indo-European tradition.

What is most interesting about the construction of the Central Javanese court as centre and source for all Javanese culture is that this positioning makes it impossible for court culture to have an historical past, one that can be acknowledged to have developed and changed over time to the present. All traditions must be understood as emerging from the court – as timeless origination source – in order for them to legitimize the court. The history of development and change in the performing arts, in particular, is difficult to document primarily because admitting change and development flies in the face of the perceived ancientness of both the performing tradition and the court. In performing traditions in general, however, theorization and codification take place well after the fact of creation and development. Central Javanese performance traditions did not spring fully formed in the eighteenth century with the rise of the Central Javanese courts. As noted above, many court styles and traditions were imported from elsewhere in Java. The Central Javanese courts have long maintained an old Javanese habit of inviting outsiders to the court. People with special talents and training would gather at the courts to share knowledge and serve the court for brief periods of time. *Dhalang* with whom I worked in the early 1990s still remembered when their fathers and grandfathers would be called for general gatherings of perform-

ers or called for individual service to the court. The shadow puppetry and gamelan performance traditions of the Central Javanese courts grew and developed as people from outside travelled into the courts and then out again bringing with them styles and ideas from other places in Central Java and beyond.⁵ Here I am not trying to diminish the role of the courts as preserver and source for some Javanese traditions both throughout their history and today even as the influence of the courts continues to decline. Rather, following Carey (1999), my goal is to decentre somewhat the courts in recounting the development of Central Javanese performance traditions, in particular with respect to wayang. Realizing that there were relationships of both proximity and distance between the Central Javanese courts and their outlying areas emphasizes the importance of intercultural flows and the changing levels of interdependence that operated both politically and culturally.

Nonetheless, the centralization of Javanese culture around the courts during the colonial period resulted in the development of educated refinement as one primary aesthetic for Central Javanese performance. Educated refinement was obtained and demonstrated through the mastery of rules that codified correct performance within certain parameters. For music, in particular, demonstrating educated refinement involved the ability to perform and discuss appropriate melodic and modal interpretation of musical works and the ability to read and write musical notation. These were important aspects of a seemingly esoteric knowledge that was cultivated in and around the courts from the early nineteenth century onward.

For a court musician today and, to a lesser extent, for urban-based conservatory musicians, musical refinement is demonstrated through the performative control gained by an understanding of music-theoretical rules and knowledge pertaining to melody and *pathet* or mode. The Javanese word for mode – *pathet* – is the same as one Javanese word for restraint (Robson and Wibisono 2002:546-7). Emotional and the related musical restraint are demonstrated through the refinement necessary to gain ‘esoteric’ knowledge. Esoteric knowledge is something not everyone is capable of controlling or even understanding since individuals have varying levels of refinement and emotional control. The rather circular, if circuitous, nexus outlined above is paralleled in constructions of Javanese personal behaviour such that people who are refined demonstrate emotional and physical restraint, control over intricate linguistic and social rules, and the capability to understand esoteric knowledge. Each of these abilities confirms the possibility of the others (Keeler 1987; Anderson 1972). The manner and style with which one demonstrates one’s refinement and control, indeed, the aesthetics of behaviour on

⁵ See Clara van Groenendaal (1985:66-92) for detailed discussion of the relationship between village and court performing traditions and musicians since the nineteenth century.

many levels, is assessed by means of *rasa*.

Naturally not all Javanese perform equally well in terms of their capacity for refinement, restraint, and esoteric knowledge, although it is generally acknowledged that most Javanese are more skilled in all three than most foreigners and non-Central Javanese Indonesians. There are, of course, remarkable exceptions on both sides. Amongst Central Javanese it is generally held that most women are not as refined as men and that most village people are not as refined as urban people who have the benefit of the influence of the courts in near proximity (Keeler 1990). This is not to suggest that there are not many extremely refined Javanese women and equally many ill-behaved Javanese men.⁶ Instead, as many Javanese do, I am describing some basic Javanese stereotypes and cultural assumptions without insisting on strict boundaries or definitive categories.

The tendencies in Central Javanese culture that I have been describing were enhanced through contact and sustained interaction with European and nineteenth-century Wahabi Islamic constructions of male authority in political and cultural affairs.⁷ It is clear that Javanese court culture, while once populated by potent females prior to and during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, came gradually to be dominated by men and male criteria through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Concurrently, many of the developments associated with Central Javanese court culture came to be gendered as male. In terms of musical culture, male court musicians were interested in modal theory; they were skilled in reading and writing notation; they were in possession of the internal restraint necessary for proper musical interpretation. By default women and village musicians were not as capable of, interested in, or exposed to these cultural standards and practices. And yet, another set of musical practices and beliefs survived the transforming masculinization of the colonial period.

Listening back to an earlier Java: 'rasa', female 'gender' players, and 'grimingan'

The assertion that we can hear an earlier Java when we listen to old-style wayang and female-style *genderan* comes directly from the mouths and minds of contemporary performers themselves. They emphatically state that they perform in the old-style, a style which their mothers, fathers, grandparents, and older ancestors played and taught, sometimes in the villages, sometimes in the courts. The knowledge of the longevity of their tradition is absorbed

⁶ See Suzanne Brenner's (1995, 1998) discussion of alternate Javanese interpretations of the refinement of men and women.

⁷ Aspects of this idea permeate, in different ways, the following works: Andaya 2000a; Stoler 1997; Florida 1996; Gouda 1993; Taylor 1983; Kumar 1980a, 1980b.

and conveyed through their own living and learning of the style, embodied in a visceral manner that affirms and confirms the present relevance of their own artistic pursuits and the continuity of it to that of their ancestors. The history of the style, as I have earlier observed, certainly reaches back to the beginning of the twentieth century as most of the performers involved in this study learned directly from parents or other relatives who were born before the end of the nineteenth century or at the beginning of the twentieth century. By all reports those teachers learned in the same way from their own parents and family. Thus, I have not specified an exact temporal period, preferring to invoke the same kind of undelimited past described by the musicians in the study, usually referred to in Indonesian or Javanese as *dulu*, *lama*, or *kuna*. That said, I feel sure that, allowing for individual innovation and influence from other styles over the period of a century, the aesthetic I am describing reflects one that has been performed in some areas of Central Java near Surakarta from at least the middle of the nineteenth century. Here are some of the comments I collected from the musicians themselves.

In the past it was mostly women who played the *gender* because it was usually the wife of the *dhalang* who was his main performer, that is, the *gender* player. However, when a man played *gender* in the past, it was sure to be in the same style as that of the women *gender* players because that was the style that was *umum* or general. (Sudarsono 14 December 1990: personal communication.)

In male style there is no inner essence (*intisari*) nor are there any ornaments (*sari-sari*, another Javanese word for flower). It is too simple. It can be notated and it is more regular and ordered (*diatur*). In the past my mother was my favorite accompanist. Sadly, now I have to use a male player because there are no women left who know my style. (Bapak Kestik (alm), *dhalang*, 9 July 1991: personal communication.)

The *rasa* of male style *grimmingan* in wayang is often lacking (Ibu Pringga 31 May 1991: personal communication).

Grimingan played in male or urban style (*gaya laki*, *gaya kota*) is not as good as that played in old or female style. The feeling of the *pathet* does not come out. (Bapak Mudjoko (alm), *dhalang*, November 1990: personal communication.)

There are generally three types of musical accompaniment used in the performance of wayang: *gendhing* or musical pieces that require a full gamelan ensemble; *pathetan* and *sendhon* or vocal pieces sung by the *dhalang* accompanied by some combination of the soft-style elaborating instruments such as the *gender* (metallophone with up to fourteen keys suspended over pitched-resonators), the *rebab* (two-stringed, spiked fiddle), the *gambang* (twenty-one keyed xylophone) and the *suling* (bamboo flute); and *grimmingan* or music played on the *gender* when no other musical accompaniment is requested by the *dhalang*, used in order to keep the scale in the ear of the *dhalang* and the

feeling of the *pathet* or mode in the ears and hearts of all attending the performance. While some *dhalang* prefer to perform with no *grimmingan*, claiming they find it distracting, in the above quotes from performers who do appreciate it, female-style *grimmingan* is clearly felt to be more expressive of *pathet* and *rasa* in wayang performance and female *gender* players are generally acknowledged as more attentive to the needs, musical and dramatic, of the *dhalang*.

Wayang performance is often described as encapsulating the primary aesthetic of Javanese culture – defined as the negotiation of power and potency of male rulers and revealed by a competition to demonstrate refinement, restraint and seemingly effortless control over everything in the realm.⁸ The *dhalang* himself, at least in performance, is claimed to represent a ruler's ultimate, behind-the-scenes control over the emotions and movements of the puppets, musicians, and audience. Given this, how can we make sense of the importance of the female *gender* player and the music she plays as reflected in the quotes above?

Given the fact that it was once usual for a *dhalang* to marry his *gender* player, a functionalist and economic rationale is possible. It is easier for a *dhalang* to perform with a familiar accompanist; it is easier, for a variety of reasons, to travel with one's wife than someone else; and it is more economical to keep all the profit earned at an event in the same family. I even heard one *dhalang* who performed in the old-style invoke the usualness of this situation by inserting into his narrative a joke about his 'wife' (*estriné*) when, by chance, his *gender* player for the evening was momentarily replaced by a male performer who could play in the old- or female-style (Bapak Gandasukasno 12 March 1991). But these functional explanations alone cannot explain the significance the *dhalang* and musicians quoted above accorded to the female style of *gender* accompaniment, in particular its power to ensure a correct *rasa* for the wayang performance.

Rasa is a complicated word in that it conveys multiple meanings simultaneously. Studies of Javanese aesthetics have observed the dual nature of *rasa*, suggesting that the term is associated both with emotional release and with restraint; with educated refinement and unreserved human response; with controlled rightful order and cataclysmic chaos (Judith Becker 1993; Benamou 1998, 2002; Weiss 2003; Zoetmulder 1995). One aspect of *rasa* that has not been fully explored is the gendering of *rasa* as both male and female. While the predictable pairing of maleness with refinement and femaleness with emotional

⁸ Anderson uses this idea throughout his analysis of wayang characters (1965) and then later as a predominant background theme in his analysis of Javanese power (1972). Keeler's (1987) interpretation of the cultural status and community position of performing *dhalang* is rooted in this aesthetic paradigm. Brandon's characterization of wayang puppets (1970:38-51) and the three stories he translates reveal this aesthetic paradigm to be important.

excess certainly functions, this alignment is not the only one represented in Javanese myths and stories, in particular those in which fertility and continuity of tradition are the subject. The myths told about female *gender* players and other legendary Javanese women generally revolve around the pairing of two sets of opposites, aspects of chaos and order – as in emotional release and restraint – and maleness and femaleness. In these myths, order and chaos are always gendered but neither is always male or female. The multiple intersections between these pairings results in a generative, prosperity-ensuring interaction (Pemberton 1994:197-216).

How, then, is it possible for this kind of dynamic interaction to be articulated as an aesthetic? In the introduction to her *Engendering song; Singing and subjectivity in Prespa Albanian song*, Jane Sugarman (1997) outlines and critiques two theoretical approaches often employed by ethnomusicologists in their work on aesthetics: the identification of homologues reflected on many levels in the culture (Judith Becker and Alton Becker 1981) and the documentation and organization of what people say about performance commonly referred to as ethnoaesthetics (Robertson 1979). Sugarman points out that the former is too removed from practice and the latter too near for any kind of comparative interpretation. In practice much ethnomusicological work on aesthetics has combined the two approaches (Feld 1988; Turino 1993; Rice 1994; Brinner 1995). Of course, with any approach to the description of the aesthetics of a group there has to be at some level an assumed unity of experience and perspective among the people who make up the group. This is one of the problems Rice (2003) has been wrestling with in his subject-centred musical ethnography. Although he does not articulate it in exactly these terms, Rice argues that starting from the subject's thoughts and experiences – interaction with both the global and the local (place) and through time – allows the ethnomusicologist to generate interpretation based on the intersection between the group of individual experiences documented and the composite that emerges from the comparison of them in context. His use of the concept of metaphor resonates with the way in which the Beckers and Feld have used the Piercian term, iconicity. In his analysis of Kaluli performative culture, Feld (1988:92-4) describes an aesthetic as a cultural style that repeats itself on many levels in a particular society.⁹ He suggests that there is an iconicity of image and idea that is 'naturally' obvious to people from within the culture, and, ideally, becomes so for outside interpreters of the aesthetic (Feld 1988:93). Rice's model adds lived experience to and removes the timelessness from the approaches of scholars like the Beckers and Feld.

⁹ Feld bases his ideas about aesthetics on the work of Robert Armstrong (1971). Other ethnomusicologists whose work has been influenced by Robert Armstrong include Charles Keil (1979) and Ron Emoff (2002).

The words Javanese performers use to describe their understanding of the sound and aesthetics of the female style of playing the *gender*, or *genderan* and old-style wayang evoke both an ‘iconicity of image and idea that is “naturally” obvious’ at many levels in Javanese culture – contemporary and historical – as well as an intense independence of style that confirms the non-totalizing multiplicity of local style in Java. I do not view this situation as contradictory or problematic. Indeed, I use the tension between the two to illuminate the lived experience of performers in a particular time and place, to express the multiple layers of meaning in performing old-style wayang in the last decades of the twentieth century, and to listen back to the reverberations of earlier meanings. To set the scene for the remainder of this study, I close this introduction with one description of the aesthetics of old-style wayang – a composite that emerged from my comparison of the individual experiences in cultural and historical context that are documented in this study.

In an iconic sense, the ‘naturalness’ of the physical, gendered pairing of the *dhalang* with his wife/*gender* player is invoked and repeated in the intimate intertwinings of the aural relationship between the *dhalang*’s voice and the *grimingan* of the *gender*. It is woven into the narrative or dialogue recounted by the *dhalang* and even in the structure some of the scenes, such as the *kedhatonan* in which the king seeks reassurance in his endeavour from the beauty and solidity of his palace and solace in the comfort of the embrace of his queen.¹⁰ We can feel Feld’s ‘naturalness’ in the repetition of these pairings from the broad stroke of a myth to the intimate aural conversation between the recitations of the *dhalang* and the *grimingan* of the *gender* player. This is the aesthetic that underlies the form and flow of old-style wayang, the aesthetic that is suggested to the ears of *dhalang* and musicians when they hear the sound of what is today called female-style *genderan*. A wayang aesthetics based primarily on aspects of male potency and power is a relatively new phenomenon. The aesthetics of old-style wayang is based on an acknowledgment of the inevitability of chaos and the striving of humans to overcome the vicissitudes of its alternation with order in the search for some kind of predictable prosperity through a generative interaction between genders on many levels. When *dhalang* and musicians hear female-style *genderan* today, they are listening back to an earlier Java in which these ideas were prevalent. The reader is invited, like the wayang hero Bima in his quest for mystical knowledge, to enter the ears of these performers of a vanishing tradition.¹¹

¹⁰ The *kedhatonan* scene has lost much of its old, yet gained new, relevance in contemporary performance (see Chapter V of this book, Pausacker 2002, and Sutton 1987).

¹¹ See Soebardi 1975 for a translation of the nineteenth-century Surakartan poem in which the Dewa Ruci story is related.

CHAPTER I

Musical analysis and cultural analysis

Pathet, grimmingan, and gender

The Javanese musicians who participated in this study base their understanding of the importance of the female style of *genderan* and its location in the old-style wayang tradition and Javanese culture in general on sound. My thoughts about the gendering of this style of *gender* playing as feminine started with several Javanese musicians insisting that they could identify the gender of the performers simply by the sound of what they played. 'The inner essence of the style is feminine, the sound is feminine'¹ is how one musician described it when I urged him to muse on why the style in which he, himself, performed on the *gender* was called the female style. Understanding the sound and process of this music is a logical point from which to begin since it is from the sound that much Javanese interpretation starts.

To begin this book with a chapter on musical analysis might seem antithetical to cultivating the mixed audience of non-specialist ethnomusicologists, Southeast Asianists, and others for whom this book is written, catering, instead, to the rather smaller group of Javanese music experts. Musical analysis, however, need not be written to exclude outsiders to the usual forms of musical discourse. In this chapter I will introduce *genderan* to the reader and briefly explain the process in which *gender* players engage as they perform mood-sensitive music for at least four of the eight hours of music necessary to accompany an old-style wayang. In the process I will suggest that this music is the source for Javanese theories of mode as they have been codified by urban court and conservatory musicians over the course of the twentieth century.

¹ 'Intisariné putri, suarané putri' was the way Bapak Karnadihardja put it while explaining why he could never play exactly in the style of his mother and grandmother who had taught him to play.

On musical notation

Musical analysis is always challenging because the analyst must explain a non-verbal, temporal phenomenon in words. Musical notation is often an aid to the analysis and interpretation of Western art music not only because it is the code in which the music is now conveyed and preserved, but also because it allows the analyst to demonstrate and indicate aspects of form, structure, flow, and pitch without having to rely on verbal description. Musical notation itself, from any culture or era, is always an incomplete code, however. One must know something of the performance practice in order to interpret properly, make sense of, the sound indicated by the notation. The inexactness of musical notation is jarring in a world in which the printed word is highly regarded and generally viewed as authoritative. The misfit between notation and sound has engendered myriad on-going debates about Western music performance traditions from the beginning of music notation through to contemporary composition. Similar issues and debates swirl through the scholarly worlds of other music cultures with different notational systems.

Notation systems do enable easy communication with others who know the code, in particular about anything that can be commonly understood from looking at the notation. Familiarity with the code usually reflects some kind of insider relationship to the music and the system. In addition, a notational system itself conveys certain expectations about the music it represents. To notate music not usually represented in a particular notational system fosters assumptions about the music as represented that might not be appropriate, hence skewing the interpretation of the music by someone who knows the notational system but not the sound and style of the unfamiliar music represented. Despite its ubiquity, the common assumption of its universality, the strong likelihood that most music specialists might feel more comfortable with a familiar code, and in particular because of the embedded assumptions it conveys, Western music notation is not the most useful representational form for the style of music that is at the centre of this study.

Javanese music has its own music notation. Interested in preserving Central Javanese court musical culture, Dutch scholars and collectors worked with Javanese court musicians to develop a notation system beginning in the nineteenth century. Although various contour-pictorial methods were tried,² by the early 1950s a cipher system, in which each note of the Javanese scale was designated with a particular number and the numbers were grouped in

² See Perlman 1991 for a discussion of *nut ranté* (chain notation) and other forms of notation that were tried. See Sumarsam 1995 for further description of notation systems and extensive discussion of the cultural milieu of mutual exchange that engendered the development of Javanese notational systems.

measure-like units albeit without barlines, was determined to be the most useful, in part because it could be produced on a type-writer. There are two Javanese scales, the five-tone *slendro* and the seven-tone *pelog*. The numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 are used for *slendro* and 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 are used for *pelog*. The missing 4 in the *slendro* roster is meant to indicate a larger gap or interval between pitches 3 and 5 than is heard between any of the other consecutive numbers. Of course, as gamelan ensembles are individually tuned, larger gaps can occur between different pitches depending on the taste of the gamelan maker. In general, however, it can be stated that in most gamelan ensembles, the gap between 3 and 5 does represent an actual aural phenomenon at some level. In this study I will only discuss the *slendro* scale.

Javanese gamelan music: some basics

Javanese gamelan music is cyclic, meaning that most pieces have internal repeats. It is usual for a large piece to have at least two sections, and many pieces are actually suites – strings of pieces related to each other by mode and in decreasing relative size, each with internal repeats, connected together. The sound of a large, deeply resonant, sometimes pitched, gong begins and ends each section and its repeats. The cycles are subsequently subdivided into quarters, eighths, and sixteenths in various ways. These subdivisions are marked by the striking of various instruments, the sound of which confirms location in the form or structure for musicians who know where they are and can aid a musician who is lost.

The basic melody is played by a group of metallophones, instruments with metal slabs tuned to the pitches of the *slendro* or *pelog* scale. In the case of a *slendro* instrument the pitches are usually 6, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 1 in which the first 6 and 1 are about an octave lower than the second 6 and 1. The basic melody is called *balungan* which means skeleton in Javanese.³ The bodily image of a skeleton is useful as an analogy for understanding the layered texture of Javanese music and its progression through time. If the basic melody is the skeleton, then the instruments that mark arrivals at the quarter, eighth, or sixteenth in the cycle are like the heart and lungs rhythmically keeping the body alive, and the many instruments that elaborate the basic melody add skin, hair, eye color, and even personality. The relationship of the melodies of the elaborating instruments to the basic melody varies from simple doubling to elaborate heterophonic phrases that move far away from the basic melody

³ Sumarsam (1995:144-60) suggests that the term *balungan* came to be used during the early twentieth century, the period in which Javanese music was being theorized in response to European notions of 'high art' music.

finally landing on concordant notes at moments of arrival, significant to the basic cyclic form. There is abundant use of overlap and delay with respect to the moments of arrival, in particular by the female singer or *pasindhen*, the *rebab* or two-stringed spiked fiddle, and the *suling* or end-blown flute.

Inherently binary, the music is aurally organized in groups of four notes as played by the *balungan* instruments. It is this melody and the subdivisions of the cycle that the Javanese have chosen to notate. The parts for the elaborating instruments are rarely written out except occasionally in the teaching process and in the compendia of patterns and melodies compiled by teacher/musicians like Martopangrawit in the middle part of the twentieth century.⁴ It is extremely uncommon for any musician playing an elaborating instrument to perform from a part that has been written out. If the musician does not already know the piece, even a moderately inexperienced musician will be able to derive some kind of part for his or her instrument by looking at the notation for the *balungan*.

In a most basic form, the elaborating parts are composed of patterns that lead to specific pitches. Here is notation for one phrase in a form called a *ladrang*: 6) 5653 2126). The parentheses indicate the passing of the quarters of the cycle and an instrument called a *kenong*, a tall-sided, racked gong, would be sounded on each of the pitches followed by a parenthesis. The *balungan* players would strike their instruments playing the numbers as written and the elaborating instrumentalists would create their parts by selecting from their musical imaginations patterns that lead from the end of one set of four notes, called a *gatra*, to the end of the next. In our example this would be a pattern leading from 6 to 3 and then a pattern leading from 3 to 6. An accomplished performer will have numerous patterns to choose from and, once it is chosen, will ornament the pattern with decorative melodic filigree. The choice of pattern is determined by the mode or *pathet* of the piece or internal section, the melodic choices of other musicians, and the aesthetic of the individual performer. These are split-second choices that can almost feel automatic; musicians often know the pieces so well they do not even have to think about pattern choice. In pieces with which they are less familiar, musicians may follow the notation and they will be especially attentive to the choices of performers who do know the piece and the sound of the piece as it is progressing, often changing melodic and even modal interpretation of particular sections or phrases in the second or third time through the cycle.⁵

Mode has many meanings in musicological discourse ranging from defining a simple series of notes like a scale – such as major or minor – to defin-

⁴ See Martopangrawit 1973 for example.

⁵ For an extensive discussion on the competence and learning the process of performing Javanese music see Brinner 1995.

ing a sound world in which certain melodic gestures and turns of phrases are associated with one particular mode and evoke in the ear and heart of the knowledgeable listener the affect and mood and possibly certain stories, events, pictures, or other cultural products associated with that mode. *Pathet* in Javanese music is somewhere in between these two extremes of possible definitions for the word mode in English-language musical discourse. Every Javanese piece is given a modal designation, although in some cases there is disagreement. In the *slendro* scale most people agree that there are three modes: *pathet nem*, *pathet sanga*, and *pathet manyura*. Over the last quarter of the twentieth century, wayang performers developed a fourth mode called *pathet manyuri*. As far as I know only music for battles and victory is composed in this mode. Its relation to the other modes in *slendro* is similar to that of the relationship between *pathet sanga* and *pathet manyura*. In other words, the phrase that might be notated 1612 1615 in *pathet sanga*, would be notated 2123 2126 in *pathet manyura* and 3235 3231 in *pathet manyuri*. In each case the contour of the pattern is the same, but the pitch on which the phrase begins is successively one note higher. For a person playing an elaborating instrument, the pattern s/he would play from pitch 2 to pitch 5 in the *pathet sanga* contour could be conceptually the same as that played for the pattern from pitch 3 to pitch 6 in the *manyura*, simply transposed up one step. On an instrument like the *gender* the performer can shift his or her hands one pitch to the right and play the same pattern and contour. Of course, one might not choose to do that for aesthetic reasons or because of some aspect of the piece which requires a special interpretation at a particular moment, but it is theoretically possible. To imagine this process in another way, what this means is that the patterns one can play to pitch 2 in *pathet sanga* have the same contours as the patterns one can play to pitch 3 in *pathet manyura*.

Most of the basic patterns in common usage are associated with the two modes *pathet sanga* and *pathet manyura*. There are very few patterns specific to the third mode in the *slendro* scale, *pathet nem*. Creating a part for one of the elaborating instruments for a piece in *pathet nem* involves using those patterns that are specific to *pathet nem* where they can be used and then choosing patterns from *pathet sanga* and *pathet manyura* for the rest. How does the performer know whether to choose a pattern to 2 from *sanga* or *manyura*? These decisions are based on the melodic context of the *gatra* and require that the performer understand the character and usual gestures of both *pathet sanga* and *pathet manyura*. It is generally the case that interpretation of pieces in *pathet nem* is, if not more difficult, certainly more complex than in the other *slendro* modes. However, in *pathet sanga* there are also pieces in which the modal interpretation is moderately unclear and musicians often argue with one another about the aesthetic merits of interpreting various sections in one mode or another after they finish performing a work in which there is some

kind of modal ambiguity. It is rarely the case that modal interpretation for pieces in *pathet manyura* is unclear. The relative levels of clarity in the interpretive process for pieces in the different modes are reflected in the overall or 'usual' affect or *rasa* associated with the modes as they function with respect to wayang kulit or shadow puppet performance.

A traditional wayang kulit performance in Central Java lasts for about eight hours from 8:00 pm in the evening until *subuh*, the Islamic call to prayer at dawn. The overnight performance is usually divided into three segments determined by *pathet*. After an introductory musical suite of pieces in *pathet manyura*, the *Pathet Nem* segment runs from about 8:30 pm until 12:30 am, the *Pathet Sanga* segment from 12:30 am until 3:30 am, and the *Pathet Manyura* segment from 3:30 until 5:30 am. In these large segments most of the musical events are in the associated *pathet*. The 'usual' affect of the *pathet* in general is an abstraction derived from the flow of the emotional development in the wayang performance. In explaining this process, many Javanese resort to analogies with the course of human life. I first heard this interpretation from Midiyanto S. Putra, a *dhalang* and musician from Wonogiri, Central Java who has lived many years in the United States as a teacher and performer. The following exegesis is paraphrased from a lecture demonstration Midiyanto presented to students at the University of Sydney during a wayang workshop in 1995.⁶

The flow of *rasa* or affect through a wayang performance develops like that of a child growing into adulthood and then into old age. At the beginning of one's life one is confused, unable to solve problems or think clearly. Problems arise and one can understand the problem but cannot imagine a solution or even how to begin solving it. One has doubt about everything due to the obscuring effect of inexperience. This is the feeling that is associated with the first section of the wayang, the *Pathet Nem* segment. It is the part of the performance in which the problems in the evening's story are laid out by the *dhalang* and the puppet characters discuss the nature of the problems and confer as to why they do not yet understand how to solve them. This narrative confusion is paralleled by the modal confusion that characterizes interpretation of musical pieces in *pathet nem*.

The middle of one's life is characterized by vigorous action, humour, the feeling that one can solve problems whatever they may be, readiness to take on responsibility, and the realization that despite one's extreme capability and perspicacity there still remain problems for which one cannot derive a solution. This mix of confidence and the acceptance of a lack of total clarity of vision characterize the middle segment of a wayang in which there is a long

⁶ In a 1990 article Richard Schechner recounts a human comparison to the development of an evening's wayang performance, apparently also from Midiyanto.

clown scene revealing the foibles of humankind, various unrelated battles, generally a lack of forward motion toward a solution of the original problem, although there may be intermediate solutions to new secondary problems that have cropped up as the characters have sought out a solution to the original disturbance. This confidence and adult acceptance of temporary confusion are reflected both by the modal clarity of many pieces in *pathet sanga* and the reality of modal confusion in certain commonly played pieces.

The end of one's life is characterized by wisdom and clarity of vision, but also by a desire for regularity and, finally, an acceptance of the personal and human failings with which one has wrestled throughout one's life. This clarity of perspective is reflected in the *Pathet Manyura* section of the wayang in which the problems of the characters in the story are finally resolved to the extent possible, the foibles in certain characters are discussed and analysed, and wisdom in the form of lessons for the lives of the audience members based on the story is dispensed by the *dhalang* through the puppets. Pieces performed in *pathet manyura* both in the wayang and other repertoires have virtually no modal inconsistencies, the interpretation of the melodies is a clear and generally predictable process, and the pieces themselves are deliciously fulfilling and, surprisingly, rarely tiresome even after one has been playing them regularly for decades.⁷

When musicians mention the *rasa* of a particular piece, they are making reference to at least two levels of affect. The first is to what I have called the 'usual' *rasa* of the *pathet* – the feelings associated with the intertwining of the emotions associated with the different stages in the flow of life with the emotional stages through which the characters travel during the course of a wayang performance. The second is how the piece itself makes them feel personally. Sometimes this reaction is related to the flow of the melody itself and/or sometimes this is related to a particular memory the musician associates with the piece.

As one of the areas of musical performance that has been theorized in the last half of the twentieth century, the ability to talk about modal theory is highly regarded amongst most Central Javanese musicians. The ability to engage with others in debating appropriate interpretations of particular sections using abstract assessments of modal trajectory such as, 'in this *pathet* pitch 3 is always *kempyung*', rather than simplistic aesthetic statements such

⁷ Because of this interpretive clarity students generally begin learning to play the elaborating instruments on pieces in *pathet manyura*. One does not really begin to appreciate the predictability of *pathet manyura* pieces until one learns pieces in *pathet nem*. The ease with which one can play a new piece in *pathet manyura* increases with every foray into *pathet nem*. So from a music performance perspective, the wisdom and clarity one gains in terms of interpreting pieces in *pathet manyura* does increase as one ages, paralleling the flow through both life and a wayang performance.

as, 'it sounds better if you do it like this,' reveals immediately who is educated in the urban court- and conservatory-based musical theories and who is not.⁸ Although the two kinds of statement express related aspects of musical aesthetics, the language used to explain the reasons indicates much about status of the speakers given the high valuation of theoretical knowledge in late twentieth-century Java. Notation itself, associated with the courts and urban knowledge, is occasionally – although decreasingly so – a status marker in that some performers who think of themselves as village musicians may occasionally claim that they cannot read it, preferring instead to play by ear, even if they do not know the piece.

'*Pathet*' and 'the village'

The idea that village musicians do not, or even cannot, understand mode is an issue that pervades nearly every discussion in which the topics of *pathet* and village musicians occur together. That both urban and village musicians affirm this statement vehemently suggests that it might be true. However, while urban musicians may insist that understanding *pathet* is key to correct interpretation of musical works, the fact that professional village and urban musicians can play music together, occasionally in perfect aesthetic concord, suggests that the debate about *pathet* is more complicated.

The following comments about *pathet* competency refer to urban and village professional musicians. There are plenty of untrained musicians for whom gamelan performance is a social activity. The musicians in this group, in either urban or rural settings, are generally capable but not expert, relying instead on the knowledge of a professional musician to guide them in their interpretations and performance. There are three levels of capability in terms of understanding and performing *pathet*. First and most distinct is the ability to articulate reasons for why one should interpret a passage in a particular way in performance. This level of *pathet* competency is revealed both in performance and in comments regarding the correctness of playing particular patterns and gestures in certain places and the theoretical reasons for the choices. Many but by no means all urban professional musicians have this capability. Younger musicians who have gone to conservatory at either the high school or tertiary levels will have command over this kind of knowledge.

⁸ *Kempyung* refers to the striking of two notes together in which the interval between them is two pitches or two bars on one of the metallophones in a gamelan ensemble. The interval between the two notes changes depending on the pitches played, but it is usually some kind of fifth or sixth. For example, the striking of pitches 2 and 6 together in which the 2 is below the 6 is a *kempyung* as is the striking of 3 and 1 together in which the 3 is below the 1. Pitches 3 and 5 are between the 2 and the 6 while pitches 5 and 6 are between the 3 and the 1.

The second level of competency involves an intuitive understanding of *pathet* learned through hours and hours of lived experience listening and performing. Musicians with this level of competency may use sentences like 'that doesn't sound like *pathet sangra*' as a kind of correction to another musician but they would not use theoretical statements about pitch relations, relying instead on demonstration to make their point. Most professional village musicians operate in this manner as do some urban ones. In the learning of new pieces, musicians with this kind of *pathet* competency draw from their reserve of known pieces and predictable modal movements as they work out an interpretation for the new piece. This is an aural version of the same kind of process through which theoretically-minded musicians go when they learn a new piece. The musical results may be the same, except in places where there is modal ambiguity. In these situations, a musician with an aural competency may resort to *mbalung*, which means creating a part that stays close to the *balungan* melody. This process involves playing short patterns to the second and fourth note of a *gatra* instead of rendering a modally clear pattern played over the four notes of a *gatra* that might be aurally divergent from the predominant mode but would be a preferable choice for those with the theoretical knowledge of *pathet*. It is precisely this kind of performance choice that is emblematic of the difference between urban and village musicians in general.⁹ A more precise distinction would be between musicians who have been educated in conservatory and those who have not, because there are non-conservatory educated urban musicians who *mbalung* in places where their conservatory-educated peers would not.

The third level of *pathet* competency is one in which the performer only imitates other performers, without actually hearing mode. In performing an unknown piece, this kind of performer will *mbalung* throughout. This kind of interpretation is frustrating to professional village and urban musicians alike and the performer will often be replaced if the politics of the move can be negotiated and there is another who can play with more appropriate interpretation.

Beside decisions regarding patterns and melodic gesture choice, issues of tuning and sensitivity to the patterns others choose may also be related to a performer's knowledge of *pathet*. In the performance of *rebab* and vocal parts one rarely plays notes that are precisely in tune with the gamelan instruments. The negotiation of the tuning of particular notes within the large intervals between pitches in the scale is called *embat*. Some performers insist that certain notes be sharpened or flattened in particular modes. For instance, the lowering of pitch 1 at the ends of descending phrases in *pathet sangra* is one common, modally-determined tuning habit. Most often, this

⁹ Perlman 1994 discusses *mbalung* more extensively.

kind of tuning seems to be an aesthetic rather than a theoretical decision, and traditions with respect to *embat* develop amongst people who normally play music together in a certain place on a particular gamelan, the tuning of which also impacts on group tuning habits. Sensitivity to other people's *pathet* decisions, particularly amongst those for whom theoretical knowledge is especially valued, can be as much a political as a musical act in which obeisance to one's musical elders may be reflected in modal interpretation.¹⁰

Pathet competency of individual musicians is determined not so much by their residence in either an urban or rural environment, but rather by their learning process: whether they have pursued formal education in music or whether their musical knowledge has, instead, been developed entirely through lived experience. In either case, a professional musician will be competent to perform a wide variety of pieces with diverse groups of musicians from either urban or rural areas. The primary difference lies with one's relative ability to articulate theoretical rationales for modal decisions.

If knowledge of *pathet* is considered a primary skill – necessary to the rendering of the appropriate musical aesthetic of a work – by educated urban musicians, and if professional village and urban musicians can successfully play music together, then everything that has been described in modal theory must be something that rural professional musicians understand even if they do not/cannot articulate it. At this point in the argument, advocates for the primacy and centrality of court and urban locations to the development of Central Javanese culture might suggest a linear relationship between modal practice in urban and rural areas. They might argue that rural musicians are simply imitating modal practice as it was conceived and is still done in the courts, but without real understanding of the intricacies of the theory. They might conclude that rural musicians play an impure version of what is preserved and fostered in the urban high culture music. Indeed, many musicians, urban and rural, with whom I discussed this problem felt that this description of the relationship between urban and rural traditions accurately reflects historical process and contemporary practice.

In what follows, however, I present an alternative interpretation, one that has come about through my analysis of *grimmingan* – the solo accompaniment played on the *gender* during old-style wayang performances. I suggest that, far from being unaware of *pathet*, professional village musicians who perform on the *gender* for this kind of wayang kulit actually create a music that is expressive of the same kind of melodic gesture and modal affect of *rasa* that has come to be codified as *pathet* theory. These performers understand the sound of *pathet* but they do not usually articulate the theoretical rules. As

¹⁰ Brinner 1995 has an extended discussion of the political nature of musical choices and competency.

they make the musical choices that enable them to perform *grimmingan*, they are demonstrating knowledge of *pathet*, albeit a form of non-verbal comprehension.

Let me state clearly that I am not arguing for the primacy of the village tradition over that of the court in any kind of a linear historical development or of female *gender* players over male players in terms of the ability to convey *rasa*, although there are Javanese musicians who would argue vehemently for and against both of these assertions. Whether the old style of *gender* performance developed in the court or in the village is not important for this study. This is, however, an interesting question that does not have a simple unidirectional answer, for the oral and written traditions of transmission of performing arts in Java continue to coexist and interact. As most Javanese musicians who know about the old style of *wayang* will tell you, the style in which the *gender* players involved in this study perform was once the general style, one in which all *gender* players – male or female – performed, whether they were rural or urban musicians. They will also tell you that it was usually the case that women were *gender* players for *wayang* performances, although there were plenty of men who could, did, and do play *gender* in the old style.

Old-style *genderan* is identified by a fluid interweaving of the melodies played by the left and right hands. There is an incessant rippling of sound alternating between the two hands of the player. The music seems virtually continuous, as though the point of having two different parts played by two hands is textural rather than melodic. Arrivals at important points in *gendhing*, *suluk*, and *grimmingan* phrases alike are often staggered. This staggering effect reduces the impact of the modal nature of the melodic gestures. In new-style *genderan* there is often a heavy feeling of pause in which motion in both hands generally stop at significant arrival points in *gendhing*, *suluk*, and *grimmingan*. The distinction between the melodies of the two hands is apparent and the modal nature of the pattern or phrase is heard with clarity. The main point of the two hands playing together is the creation of polyphony, two melodies designed to interact in accord with each other. Of course, in my descriptions the differences between these styles are sharp and clear. In practice, however, performers of each occasionally borrow from the other since mature *gender* performance usually involves a musician finding his or her own interpretation of the style(s) in which he or she is trained. The gendering of these styles and the location of their praxis in either the city or the village are new phenomena.

In arguing that old-style *gender* players, male or female, have an aural understanding of *pathet* (as revealed through the analysis of their *grimmingan*), and that the music itself contains the source material for the theory of *pathet*, I am shifting the debate about *pathet* and the construction of the history and

development of musical knowledge in Central Java. The debate can no longer be constructed around assumptions about *pathet* capability based on essentialized notions of gender or location (urban or rural). Instead, the discussion has to be oriented toward a consideration of broader historical cultural trends, enabling an analysis that locates the shift in Javanese construction of the musical style from ungendered to gendered and general to village – that is, not urban/court – in the context of two hundred years of gradual change in the Javanese construction of gender and musical knowledge.

'Grimingan': an introduction

The performance had already begun when I turned into the area designated for motorbike parking. Feeling the tingle of anticipatory excitement that even an afternoon wayang kulit performance generates, I approached the stage looking intently for Ibu Sarju, the *gender* player for the afternoon. She was nowhere to be found. The *gender* box was empty except for an old gentleman with bright eyes and no teeth who smiled invitingly at me as I approached from the back of the performance area. He started when he saw that I was preparing to record the performance. He looked frantically around for anyone who could play the *gender*. I told him not to worry and that I would wait until Ibu Sarju arrived. He insisted that I start recording straight away, sat down and began noodling on the *gender*. His playing was soft, indistinct. The *dhalang*, Ki Bejonugraha, a brother of Ibu Sarju, turned around to see who was playing. On seeing me he asked me to play. I declined pointing to the recording equipment. His assistant leaned back from his position behind the *dhalang* and pointed enthusiastically at the *gender*. Knowing that they knew I could play enough *genderan* to get by, I searched for another excuse, hoping to protect a decision made at the beginning of my research not to play at any of the performances I recorded. I whispered weakly that I did not know how to play the *grimmingan* melodies. The assistant shook his head and said that it did not matter, I could learn those later. For now, I should just play the *genderan* for *suluk pathetan slendro nem* [the accompaniment for the unmetred, vocal mood song, based on the mode or *pathet slendro nem*, that had just been sung by the *dhalang*] slowly and quietly while waiting for the *dodogan*. Feeling the urgency of the request, I switched off the tape recorder and moved forward, fingering the *tabuh* (mallets). As I began the *grambyangan* [mode-defining melody] for *slendro nem*, Ibu Sarju came into the performance space. She smiled and indicated that I should continue. Chatting with some of her friends over the sounds of the performance, she slowly wended her way to the *gender* box and I returned to my tape recorder. (Weiss 23 April 1991: fieldnotes.)

Recording *gender* players accompanying wayang always involved negotiating myself into the small square of space behind the *gender* player, stowing my shoes and other personal paraphernalia into some hideaway between instruments, people, and small plates of snacks, and then setting up my tape recorder and microphone with its low-tech, bulky, home-constructed stand in

as unobtrusive position as possible. The inevitable answering of a multitude of fairly predictable questions about what I was doing at the performance was always pleasurable, since the old-style performances I attended had had relatively few foreign visitors over the years and people were genuinely pleased that someone was there recording the event. Performers and audience members were usually less interested in my presence than in the fact that I was focusing on the *gender* players and their music rather than on the performance of the *dhalang*. A week or so after every performance, I usually returned to the homes of both the *dhalang* and the *gender* player with copies of the tapes I had made. The *dhalang* were generally surprised, if momentarily miffed, and then amused that the most prominent sound on the tapes was the *gender*. The *gender* players always listened with a critical ear, alternately chastising and praising themselves as they appraised their performance in relation to that of the *dhalang*.

While I recorded continuously through each performance, I was most interested in the solo accompaniment that *gender* players created for moments when the *dhalang* was narrating or conducting dialogue between the puppets. Called *grimmingan*, this enigmatic genre seemed to have no formal structure, no generally accepted definition, and no one I asked was able to verbally express how performers created the music, sections of which could go on for as long as twenty minutes. Given that on average over four hours of an eight-hour wayang performance were filled with the sound of *grimmingan* and that many people insisted that the sound of *grimmingan* itself encapsulated the whole affective experience of an evening's performance, I was driven to figure out how *grimmingan* worked.

I was not surprised by the advice offered by the *dhalang*'s assistant in the quote at the beginning of this section. This suggestion, in essence one interpretation of how to play *grimmingan*, had already been made to me by various authorities on wayang. When I asked one conservatory musician which melodies *gender* players use when playing *grimmingan* for a wayang performance, he responded,

Oh, anything, really (*apa saja boleh*), as long as it is in the right *pathet*. Sometimes they play the *genderan* for *pathetan* or *ada-ada* [mood songs], repeating them after the *dhalang* has finished singing them or sometimes they play *gendhing*. (February 1991.)¹¹

Even in the understanding of the people who intimately know and live wayang, *grimmingan* is a special and difficult category to define or describe.

¹¹ This, indeed, was the same advice offered to me when participating in shortened *wayang kulit* performances in New York City in 1987 and 1988 with the New York Indonesian Consulate Gamelan.

According to professional *gender* player Ibu Gandasaruya, *grimmingan* is 'half *gendhing* and half ... what? (*separo gendhing, separo ... apa, iya?*).' There she stopped, unable to come up with a word or phrase that would describe *grimmingan* (13 February 1991). Ibu Pringga, also a professional *gender* player, described *grimmingan*, functionally, as simply the melodies played on the *gender* to accompany the *dhalang* when he was speaking so that if he needed to sing he would not come in on the wrong note (26 May 1991: personal communication during a bus journey). Many people, in particular *dhalang* of various ilk, described *grimmingan*, perhaps poetically, as something that causes the wayang puppets to live or come alive (Sabean 11 July 1991; Kris Sukardi 29 May 1991; Moro 7 April 1991; Sudarsono 11 November 1990; and many others).

In one of the only pieces of writing (in any language) that deals explicitly with *grimmingan*, Suratno explores the origin and meaning of the word *grimmingan* with regard to wayang performance.

The term *grimmingan* comes from the word *griming* with the ending *an*. The word *griming-griming* means to feel tickled and rather itchy. According to Bapak R. Sutrisno, *grimmingan* means to be whispering (Javanese: *glenikan*). In a different opinion from Bapak Naryacarita, *grimmingan* is a vague or indistinct sound but it can be heard. Bapak Gondosugeng explains that the meaning of *grimmingan* is a sound which can make your hair stand up on end. The meaning of *grimmingan* in the context of gamelan and wayang studies is the low, soft, sweet-sounding playing of the *gender* used to accompany the dialogue [between the puppets] or the narration of the *dhalang* which is not accompanied by *gendhing* [that is, other music]. For example, [this happens in] the dialogue after a *gendhing* [or when there is] narration from the *dhalang* after dialogue or [after a] *suluk*. (Suratno n.d.:1.)

Here, too, we find a mixture of the poetic and the functional. Nowhere, however, do we find an explanation of what is actually played or how the process of creating solo accompaniment for almost four hours of dialogue and narration – interspersed throughout an eight hour performance – actually works.

Culturally bounded styles of analysis

Nearly every player I interviewed, as well as many observers, described *grimmingan* as a process whereby the *gender* player merely followed the feeling of the scene. But how they followed the *rasa* remained unexplained. In response to a question asking her what she thought about when she played *grimmingan*, Ibu Sarju made the point that it sometimes felt that her hands were finding what to play by themselves. (*Iya, saya itu, terasa itu tangannya, kok, dapat cari sendiri*, Sarju 11 July 1991). This state, where one's hands look for and find the flowerings of melody themselves, is part of being a mature player (*matang*).

It is related to being *prigel* or clever, able to learn quickly and do things competently, and it is also related to the individual's spirit (*jiwa*) or, in a construction generally accepted by Western interpreters, to the creative impulse of the player. When one's hands are 'seeking and playing melodies by themselves', what is guiding them is not the mind (*akal*) but the spirit (*jiwa*). This explanation was frequently suggested when I pressed for a reason as to why it was that there was a difference between female and male *gender* players, even those men who had learned from female teachers and played in what was clearly identifiable as the old-style (Sarju 11 July 1991; Gandasaruya 14 February 1991; Moro 7 April 1991). These performers clearly felt and heard that there was a difference based on gender as one important aspect of a individual's *jiwa*. Further, they stressed that even two women who were related and who had a teacher/student relationship, such as that between Ibu Pringga and Ibu Sarju (aunt and niece), would play differently (Pringga 29 May 1991; Sarju 11 July 1991). The notion of the individuality of a performer's *jiwa* and the effect this *jiwa* has on what is played is one Central Javanese way of describing creativity and the processes of variation or a kind of improvisation.

My most unsuccessful interview question, the one that I asked of all the *gender* players often in more ways than they felt reasonable, was precisely the one which they could not answer and the one to which I most urgently needed a clear response. That question involved my wondering what they were thinking about when they played *grimmingan*. How did they construct the melodies? I explained to them that when I listened to what they played in a live performance, it was clear that they were not just repeating one fixed melody over and over again as had so frequently been suggested to me by both themselves and others. How were they deciding what to play next? Were they improvising? (Was I ever able to describe the concept of improvisation clearly in a way that was culturally translatable?) Were they following a structure? How did they manipulate the *grimmingan* melodies that they played for me so concisely in recording sessions? I knew that these were questions that would have been difficult even for a theoretically-minded jazz musician to answer. I felt that the questions often confused the musicians to whom I was speaking: sometimes they simply laughed at me and explained all over again that it all had to do with the feeling, the *rasa*, of the scene and what the puppets were saying.

At first I was frustrated by my apparent inability to ask the 'right' questions, which would then 'cause' the *gender* players to demonstrate step by step how they imagined and played the melodies for their *grimmingan*. I wanted the *gender* players to explain what I was hearing – 'Well, first I used this bit of the *suluk* melody and then connected it to the cadential phrase, leading on to the *grimmingan* melody of the *pathet* but in an abbreviated form,' and so on. This could not happen, though not because of miscommunication

between the *gender* players and me. They were answering the questions with exactly the information they thought I needed. Neither the questions nor the answers were wrong or inadequate. My desire to analyse and document the flexible architecture and flow of *grimingan* was as culturally specific as the musicians' responses to my questions.

My own seeking and finding structure in a musical process which the performers themselves do not articulate is rather like what urban Javanese musicians and music theorists did when they derived modal theory from these same sounds over the course of the twentieth century. Imposing a foreign system on the music renders tacit knowledge – that which is felt, known but not articulated, perhaps not even thought worth articulation – by performers as something that can be understood by those outside the world of the performance tradition.

I set about trying to find the structure that I thought I could hear in *grimingan* by organizing recording sessions with as many *gender* players as I could, in particular with those performers whom I had already or would have occasion to record in live performance during an old-style wayang. I did this in order to have a comparative sample from which to examine the music. These sessions were usually conducted at the performers' houses with the performers alone or with interested family members congregated about, comfortably perched in chairs or on straw mats seated with us on the floor. Conversation ranged widely over topics such as music gossip, philosophy, or often life in general. I often asked the performers to talk about their experiences playing at wayang and asked them about the differences between old-style wayang and the many other performance styles current at the time and during their lifetimes. We talked about *rasa* and how *grimingan* conveys *rasa* and who could play *grimingan* with correct *rasa*. As professional musicians they were usually comfortable with performing music for a recording and were interested in ensuring that the recordings were clean and that I understood what they were doing.

'Grimingan': hearing or imposing structure and form?

Because most of Central Javanese music works in patterns and/or cycles that can be repeated, I began my search for an understanding of the process of creating *grimingan* by discarding the notion that *grimingan* was some kind of free improvisation limited only by the individual's context-influenced interpretation of the mode. I could be criticized for exercising a traditional, Western, first response to an unknown in my assuming that there is a structure and then 'discovering' and imposing one that may not necessarily be there (or that may not be important to the performers). I found, however, that

when asked, Central Javanese performers do assert that *grimmingan* has a kind of structure or form. In fact, each *gender* player has in his or her repertory at least two *grimmingan* melodies for each *slendro pathet*.¹² They can all play these versions on request and when they do so, it is usually in a condensed form. What they play can sound much like the *gender* accompaniment for *suluk*, or mood song, in that particular *pathet*.¹³

Transcription and analysis reveal that while *grimmingan* has structural or formal elements, in live performance the form is not rigidly fixed. Instead, it is best to describe the performance of *grimmingan* as a process. While *grimmingan* exists in a condensed form in the minds of the *gender* players, in performance the structure is determined by the performer's understanding of how the different modally appropriate phrases can be manipulated to create a continuous and sensitive accompaniment for the utterances of the *dhalang*. There are, thus, two, integrally related and mutually enlightening, types of questions to ask of *grimmingan*. One type of question asks what is actually going on in *grimmingan* performance – how is *grimmingan* constructed in process – and is concerned with the minute detail of individual performances. The other type of question probes the nature of *grimmingan*, asking how it works as a genre within Central Javanese music culture – examining the larger context of *grimmingan*. It is important to ask both types of question as a comprehensive analysis must reflect interdependence between detail and large-scale concept.

During the recording sessions, I asked the *gender* players to imagine that they were playing through a wayang performance. This habitually involved commenting on the pieces that would require the performance of the full ensemble, the *gendhing*, and the performance of the mood songs or *suluk* and *grimmingan* wherever it seemed comfortable and appropriate to them.¹⁴ I chose this format so that the *grimmingan* selections could be heard in a context that approximated the real feeling and flow of a wayang performance. This strategy proved to be an effective one because all of the *gender* players I recorded could perform in this kind of context. In the few instances when

¹² There is no monophonic melody performed by either the voice or *rebab*. By melody here I mean a series of phrases with a predictable order of ending pitches, much like the *gender* part for a *suluk* but played solo. One of these melodies has the texture of *suluk pathetan* accompaniment and is referred to by *gender* players as conveying the usual *rasa* or emotion of the *pathet*. The other has a more regular pulse and a texture similar to the kind of energetic, emotion-charged *suluk* called *ada-ada*. As with *ada-ada*, this kind of *grimmingan* conveys a heightened level of excitement including emotions ranging from fear – anger to battle-preparedness and victory.

¹³ Transcription of these *grimmingan* segments from recording sessions reveals that the performers do have a fixed notion of these two *grimmingan* melodies in each *pathet*, performing extremely similar, although by no means exact, versions at different times, even in different years.

¹⁴ We generally began with 'Pathetan Slendro Nem Wantah' or 'Ageng', the first mood song performed in an old-style wayang, leading on to 'Ada-ada Girisa', the second mood song, followed by *grimmingan* in *slendro pathet nem* and so forth.

I asked players to perform outside of a wayang-type context, their performances were stilted. One player even became confused and declared that she could not hear what to play (anonymous April 1991).

In a wayang, particularly in the *Slendro Nem* section of the performance, a *gender* player often has to play *grimmingan* for twenty minutes or more before the *dhalang* requests something else. In the recording sessions, after they played their condensed versions of the *grimmingan* melodies, I asked the performers how they would fill in the rest of the time of the segment needing accompaniment in live performance if they were to finish playing the *grimmingan* selection after three minutes. They usually replied that they would just repeat what they had already played for me until the *dhalang* indicated that they were to stop and play something else.

Ah, keep going back (*Anu, kembali, kembali*) (Gandasaruya 13 February 1991).

What I just played, it gets repeated over and over again (*Ini tadi, diulangi, diulangi terus*) (Karnadihardja 7 August 1991).

Here, I thought, was a testable description of how the performers create *grimmingan*. Performers have a melody, perhaps like that of a *suluk* (given the frequent advice to use *suluk* for *grimmingan*), with a clear beginning and end that they simply repeat several times until the *dhalang* calls for the next musical event. Analysis of my transcriptions, however, revealed a more complicated process involving internal repetition, extension, elaboration, and other manipulations of the phrases that make up the *grimmingan* melodies.

In transcribing the selections from my field recordings I used the Javanese cipher notation system as it has been adapted for indicating *gender* parts. This involves the representation of the right- and left-hand parts simultaneously with the right-hand part notated above and the left-hand part below a central horizontal line. The line is continuous through each phrase. In the notation of *gender* parts for *gendhing*, a phrase is usually sixteen or thirty-two regular pulses long. In *grimmingan*, however, there is no uniform phrase length, nor is there a regular pulse. Instead, I have used breaks in the horizontal line to indicate arrivals at a particular pitch destinations. Most of these arrivals are succeeded by pauses of varying lengths. This pictorial representation of musical pause reflects the way in which *gender* players perform the music and allowed me to track how *gender* players expand and contract *grimmingan* phrases and structure in performance (see transcriptions on accompanying CD-ROM).

Comparing 'suluk' and 'grimangan' as played on the 'gender'

In an unmetred *suluk* all the musicians are either hearing or imagining the melody that would be sung by the *dhalang*.¹⁵ The *rebab* follows the melody of the singer closely, usually lagging behind ever-so-slightly and ornamenting with idiomatic gestures associated with both the specific *pathet* and the practice of playing *rebab* itself. The *gender* and *gambang* play moderately formulaic phrases. These phrases are constructed by the linking together of certain idiomatic, short, *pathet*-determined patterns to indicate the melody's passing-through of various subordinate pitches. These are then connected to other slightly longer patterns to indicate the anticipation and eventual arrival at more significant points usually at the ends of phrases. The *suling* performs *pathet*-derived melodic flourishes at the arrival of the most significant pitches, primarily the last, in each phrase. For each *pathet* there is a cadential or ending phrase that defines the *pathet*. This is called the *grambyangan* and is also performed before an introduction to a *suluk* (and most *gendhing*) if the mode is not already in the ears of the performers and, in a slightly extended version, functions as the last phrase of each *pathetan* and *suluk*.¹⁶

The performance of *suluk* and *pathetan* requires negotiation and timing. Everyone is following the melodic leader – the singer, or in his absence, the *rebab* player – who has a large degree of freedom in interpreting the flow and pace of these ametric melodies. In response to this, the *gender*, *gambang*, and *suling* parts are not fixed. For the *gender*, as for all the accompanimental instruments, each phrase is flexible to a great extent in both the beginning and middle. This flexibility allows the possibility of expansion or contraction of the sections of the phrases that lead to particular subordinate tones. This process can be effected through the changing of the number of repetitions of certain small units of melodic material or altering the overall pacing – slowing down or speeding up of particular gestures, or expanding or contracting the time waited in between subordinate arrivals. Once the melodic leader has

¹⁵ Through my discussions with *gender* players and other musicians as well as my own experience performing *suluk* accompaniments, I understand *suluk* melodies and their accompaniment to be organized around a series of arrivals – phrases which begin in a particular way, pass through other pitches and then arrive at, end on, other particular pitches. The vocal and accompanimental pathways taken to these arrivals are modally determined and the same pathway can be found in more than one *suluk* in the same mode. The pattern in which these arrivals are strung together is specific to a particular *suluk*. These arrivals are like subsidiary cadences in that, within a given modal context, the way in which a phrase begins often (but not always) determines the arrival tone to which it will travel. While each arrival may also determine the arrival that will follow, this level of predictability is not as convincing as that within the phrases.

¹⁶ Up to this point I have been using the term *suluk* in a general sense to mean all mood songs. In a performance context in which there is no *dhalang* and the melody is played solely on the *rebab*, however, these pieces are called *pathetan* rather than *suluk* or *suluk pathetan*.

begun the final gesture of the phrase, the rest of the instrumentalists follow suit and the phrase finishes with a certain regular predictability. The melodic leader usually waits until the instruments have completed their staggered arrivals at the phrase-ending pitch before he begins the next phrase. Each performer will play his or her own idiosyncratic interpretation of the phrases. The accompaniment for the same *suluk* played in renditions by two *gender* players will be recognizably similar but by no means the same. Differences in style can be determined by teaching lineage, learning location, personal aesthetics, and responses to the other people performing at the moment.

Grimingan is similar to *suluk* and *pathetan* in that phrases are organized by linking together certain idiomatic, *pathet*-determined gestures. These are used to indicate the passing-through of various subordinate, but *pathet*-important, pitches while other, slightly longer patterns indicate the anticipation and eventual arrival at more significant points such as the ends of phrases. The primary difference is that no one ever performs the melody as happens in *suluk* or the instrumental *pathetan*. The melody is only implied by the notes passed through and the significant arrivals at the ends of phrases. Here the word 'implied' suggests that the listener actually understands and hears the *pathet* and so can intuit the tonal relationships that are to be expected.¹⁷ The other difference is that *grimmingan* is a solo performance. There is no need to organize arrivals at particular pitches in conjunction with others. Instead, the pacing is determined by the *gender* player's interaction with the *dhalang* and the story he is telling.

When performing in a recording session with no *dhalang* to accompany, the *gender* players all performed their versions of *pathet*-specific *grimmingan* melodies in the most condensed forms. There was no need for expansion or contraction. The result is the same as when one asks a musician to play one of the instrumental parts for a *suluk* as a solo. We can, thus, get a sense of the melodic material from which the musician would draw in performance and the pacing that he or she thinks is appropriate but not a real indication of how they would perform the part, for that is always an interactive process. This was a convenient outcome for my analytical goals, since it allowed me to determine that there is indeed a melody, or better, a series of phrases with arrivals at specific pitches that comprise *grimmingan* in each *pathet* and that *gender* players imagine and hear these in similar ways. Thus, when *gender* players refer to *grimmingan*, they have a musical entity in mind, one that is probably similar to

¹⁷ Because they grew up in a world in which the diatonic scale is predominant, one can make a class of 180 American non-music major students sing in unison the last note of a diatonic scale by stopping on the seventh note of a major scale or playing a dominant major-minor seventh chord and asking them to sing the note that is next. Most of them cannot tell you why but their ears 'know' what is next. For people who hear *pathet* as their musical organization system, there is this same kind of aural inevitability when one hears certain pitch relationships.

a musician's understanding of *suluk*. It is not just a free-form improvisation in the mode. Likewise, when *gender* players talk about other musicians not understanding *grimmingan*, they are referring to real *lacunae*, from their own perspectives, in those performers' musical knowledge.

Because it is a solo genre and also because it has not been part of the urban repertoire that has been intensively theorized and codified over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there is great variation between condensed versions of the *grimmingan* melodies from different *gender* players. Performers from the same family have more similarities in their renditions of particular *grimmingan* melodies than performers from differing locations and learning environments. That said, through transcription of performances from a variety of *gender* players from differing locations in the Surakarta area, I have been able to identify and categorize overall structure, phrase order, and internal arrival sequences that can be reasonably compared to one another as similar. All *gender* players involved in this study could recognize *grimmingan* melodies when played by others. They knew in a few moments whether or not the *gender* player was playing *suluk* accompaniment as *grimmingan* or true *grimmingan* melodies.

The process of 'grimmingan'

The process of playing *grimmingan* is similar to that in which the *dhalang* engages as he develops the *lakon* [basic outline of the story or episode] he is performing. Each of these processes is different from the interpretation of *balungun* because it need not happen in a regulated time frame. The *dhalang* and the *gender* player are each free to expand, contract, embed, nest, invert, repeat, disconnect, and integrate ideas as they choose within their performance of each section of a particular story or melody, as long as they occasionally arrive at places of expectation anticipated by the audience. (Weiss 6 June 1991: fieldnotes.)

How exactly do *gender* players create *grimmingan* for a twenty-minute dramatic segment if the melody they have to work with is only about three minutes long? The answer, it turns out, is not uniform. As suggested above, some *gender* players really do just repeat the melody from beginning to end as many times as necessary. Some *gender* players try to slow down the delivery – expand the time in between notes – so that one complete statement of the *grimmingan* melody lasts for the entire scene. More usual, however, is for a performer to repeat the internal phrases in some order, usually varying them each time they repeat them.

Suppose, for example, a *grimmingan* melody has four different phrases that we can identify and label as A, B, C, and D. A performer will always start with A, because it serves as the musical and modal bridge between the last

musical event and the *grimmingan* segment. She may or may not ever return to A in that particular segment of *grimmingan*. However if she stops for some reason – someone interrupts her or she pauses to light a cigarette – she will return to A or something similar before moving on to other phrases. Then a *gender* player might play several versions of phrase B, varying it by expanding or contracting the time it takes to get to some of the internal arrivals, much in the way someone playing the *gender* for a *suluk* will accommodate their usual melodic material to the pace of the singer or *rebab* player. Our phrase order might look something like: A-B-Bⁱ-Bⁱⁱ. She might then change to focus on the C phrase, decorating and ornamenting renditions of C in a similar way leading to A-B-Bⁱ-Bⁱⁱ-C-Cⁱ-Cⁱⁱ for the overall phrase order. It is also possible to cycle through alternations between B and C, sometimes repeating particular versions before continuing on to the final phrase labeled D, leading to an overall form such as: A-B-C-Bⁱ-C-Bⁱⁱ-Cⁱ-B-Cⁱⁱ-C-D.

Some *gender* players place a high value on playing the last phrase of the particular *grimmingan* melody just as the *dhalang* finishes the scene segment. For instance, on hearing a recording of her own *grimmingan*, one *gender* player, Ibu Pringga, congratulated herself with the word, 'Pas', or 'Right on the mark', as she heard herself wrap up the *grimmingan* segment with the final phrase of the melody just in time to anticipate the *dhalang*'s call for the next musical event. Sometimes a performer will misjudge the pace of the *dhalang* or she may simply tire of internal repeats and play the final phrase long before the end of the scene. Often the *gender* player will take a brief break at this point and then begin the *grimmingan* melody again from the A phrase. Many other strategies are possible. Described here are the methods that I have come across most frequently in my analysis.

One technique used by many *gender* players is the occasional insertion of other scene-appropriate music into the context of the *grimmingan* melody, interrupting and then returning to their usual process of elaboration on the *grimmingan* melody. If the tension level of a scene is suddenly raised – the occurrence of an abrupt arrival of an emissary or the sound of an approaching army – a *gender* player may switch to the other more emotionally-charged *grimmingan* melody in that *pathet* for a short while in order to convey the increase in dramatic tension. There are certain dramatic moments, such as the robust laughter of a king or other important character, that require a specific comment from the *gender*. Performers also play a few phrases from a *gendhing* or *suluk* usually associated with a particular character or event mentioned or evoked by the *dhalang* or from a piece that foreshadows the next performance event. Occasionally a *gender* player might even insert a few phrases of music from a piece with an extra-performance meaning relevant to the performers alone. These kinds of alterations in the seamless aural texture woven by the *gender* player are noticed only by those listening intently. People who

know what to expect – who possess enough musical knowledge to catch the *innuendo* – enjoy the joke or note the skill of the musical comment, but it is not necessary to understand all of the musical commentary to obtain full enjoyment of the performance. This kind of musical comment on the *gender* is like the subtle message that passes with merely a meaningful glance between two people who know each other well.¹⁸

My description of the process of *grimmingan* suggests that there can be enormous differences between the performances of different musicians and even different performances by the same musician. It is for this reason that I have suggested that playing *grimmingan* is a performative process. A process is not as fixed an entity as a Javanese *gendhing* which itself is nowhere near as fixed as a Beethoven symphony played by a live orchestra, which in turn, pales in fixity to the repetitive performance of the same piece recorded on a compact disc. The realization or creation of *grimmingan* is determined by the momentary synergy of the musician's interpretation of the basic melodic blocks or phrases, her approach to the problem of filling time with those blocks, her response to the *dhalang* and the other musical and performative stimuli of the moment. Yet, there is no doubt that *gender* players and *dhalang* alike would recognize what was played by any of the players included in this study as *grimmingan*. Further, when I asked various *gender* players if what they heard on the tapes that I played for them was the same as what they would play, they all replied in the affirmative with a comment like: 'It's *grimmingan*, of course it is the same'.

Sameness in Javanese music performance contextualized

Depending on the context, sameness in Javanese music can be determined by correspondence on any level ranging from that of minute detail to either mid-scale or large-scale structure. Understanding sameness based on exact detail is most obvious and, perhaps, familiar. Examples of Javanese teachers correcting students at the slightest deviation from a melody as taught or arguing with one another about the minute particulars of interpretation for a specific moment in a *gendhing* are common. Here sameness describes a rigorous exactitude.

The relationship between what is played by elaborating or *panerusan* instruments such as the *gender* or the *gambang* in *gendhing* and the *balungan*

¹⁸ For the reader interested in a more extensive exploration of how this process works, this book includes a CD-ROM containing transcription and formal analysis of seventeen versions of a particular *grimmingan* segment, performed by nine different *gender* players in various kinds of recording situations.

melody can be described as a kind of mid-level structural sameness. The *balungan* of a particular melody travels along a specific series of arrival points that is the same each time the cycle is repeated (once the musicians have done the work to settle on a particular version). The *panerusan* instruments must connect with the *balungan* melody at the important arrival tones at the end of each *gatra*. Beyond this, the *panerusan* player is free to choose from a variety of interpretations. Each time through the cycle a performer can choose a different interpretation as long as the arrival points are the same and the interpretation is modally appropriate.

On a larger scale, in an evening's performance, be it a *klenengan* (an event in which musicians gather simply for the purpose of playing music) or a *wayang*, the basic structural arrival points in the evening, that is, the progression from *pathet nem* through *pathet sanga* to *pathet manyura*, must be observed. The choice of *gendhing* at the *klenengan* or how the story is filled out in the *wayang* is not predetermined. That is what makes each performance unique or worthy of note. This flow through basically predictable, yet unspecified, events is an example of large-scale similarity.

This idea suggests a subtle difference in the interpretation of cycles and coincidences from that advanced by Judith Becker and Alton Becker in their 1979 publications. The elegant idea in the Beckers' argument is that the coincidences – in Central Javanese music, *wayang* stories and performances, in Central Javanese life in general – are the most important element of the process. They argue compellingly that the stroke of the gong is what the Central Javanese ear is waiting for, the be-all and end-all of musical notes, the ultimate punctuation mark (Judith Becker 1979; Alton Becker 1979). In the context of the above discussion of sameness and in light of the comments on the importance of finding one's own *jiwa*-guided performance style, as well as the interest which is focused on individual variations and interpretations amongst most groups of Central Javanese musicians, it seems to me that the 'punctuation points' in performance – that is, the strokes of the gong and other cycle dividing instruments such as *kenong*, *kempul*, and *kethuk*; the arrivals at ends of *gatra* or the ends of phrases in *grimmingan*; the arrivals at particular stock moments in a *wayang* story – are only one half of the main point. That there is much intense discussion among Central Javanese musicians and performers on the nature of the interpretations of particular *wayang* stories and *gendhing* suggests that, to the Central Javanese ear, there is something beyond, something that is made possible by, coincidence.

What is clearly interesting and important to the Central Javanese performers and music *aficionados* is: Which path does one take to get to the arrival points? The coincidences and arrival points provide a structure within which to proceed, a structure that encourages the development of the process of 'getting there'. The sameness is the structure – mid-level or large-scale –

and the interpretive process of realizing the piece within the structure is the *gendhing* or the *lakon* (outline or *balungan* of a wayang story). Further, if the *gendhing* or *lakon* is interpreted in a way that is aesthetically pleasing or appropriate then the *rasa* may be found, captured, understood, or brought to life.

Philip Kitley points to a similar kind of relationship between structure and its realization in another Central Javanese art form, that of batik (waxed and dyed, patterned cloth used for male and female clothing).

There has been a tendency in some Western scholarship on batik to dismiss the observed variety in its composition as simply decorative and repetitive, and, in a reductive fashion, to devise categorisations which radically simplify and [...] overlook important features of batik design and batik making as reported by Javanese craftworkers (Kitley 1992:2-3).

Kitley demonstrates that Javanese sources from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries frequently mention batik as being associated with specific types of garment. There seems to be no tendency to group batik in terms of the large-scale patterns. He suggests that the discussion of batik in colonial historical sources 'reveals two opposed aesthetics: a Javanese tendency to proliferate and elaborate, and a Western tendency to pare away variety in an endeavour to lay bare structural principles'.¹⁹

One assesses the quality of batik by looking at the refinement of the marks on the cloth, the clearness of the colour, the intricacy and clarity of the detail as it leads the eye from aggregations of the minute to the larger repeating pattern. The important element for the Central Javanese is the quality of the detail. If the detail did not lead to the larger patterns, or arrival points, then the batik would not be valuable. Likewise, if only the larger patterns are present, the batik is a poor piece of work. Irrespective of colonial attempts to categorize batik, to a Javanese if the large patterns are similar, then the batik are the 'same', but one with the more finely worked and clearer detail is better or more valuable than the other.

Although I am by no means an expert in batik, I took time in June of 1993 to visit Pasar Triwindu in Surakarta, a permanent market in which an interesting collection of used, new, useful, and tourist items are sold, among these batik. I asked two of the used-batik sellers to show me some pieces that were the same. They brought out several in which there was an obvious large-pattern similarity. After making it clear that I was not going to buy, I asked them if they would charge the same price for all of them, since they were 'the same'. There ensued a heated discussion between the two women in

¹⁹ Kitley 1992:5. The relevance of this statement as a warning for my own analysis and discussion of the process of *grimmingan* is not lost on me as has been shown above.

ngoko or low Javanese regarding the relative quality of the pieces of cloth. In the end they came to an agreement and ranked the three pieces, saying that one was of much better quality, better detail, and clearer than the other two (even though one of those two was almost new) and so they would ask twice as much for the 'good' one. We concluded that although the pieces were the same, in fact they were also different.

Perhaps this flexibility in Javanese assessments of sameness explains why a musician can state that the performance of *Gendhing Gambirsawit* on Thursday was the 'same' as the performance of *Gendhing Gambirsawit* on Friday, except that the performers loved the performance on Friday and thought that Thursday's was nothing special at all, or why *gender* players can insist that the music they can hear, which is quite different in surface detail from their own *grimingan*, is actually the 'same'.²⁰ It is all in the way the piece is worked out between the arrival points that makes it 'happen'. The structure provides a base from which to begin an interpretation, that is, an understanding of what the particular realization of the *gendhing*, batik, event, *grimingan*, is actually about. Thus, the Western view of two performances as being radically different due to dissimilarity in detail and mid-level structure may ignore a Central Javanese view of their underlying sameness. It may, at the same time, devalue and underestimate the centrality of the process of realization. *Grimingan* as a genre is possible only through the intersection and interplay of similarity, difference, structure, and process.

We now understand that *grimingan* is actually a process, that there is a method to its creation – that it is not simply a musician noodling around on the *gender* in an unorganized manner. In addition, the kind of process I have described for the playing of *grimingan* is one that is concordant with the aesthetics of other Central Javanese expressive arts. But how does this help us to shift the debate and assumptions about *pathet* capability as they are understood in the music world of late twentieth-century Central Java? Further, how might an answer to the previous question help us to understand the gradual changes in the construction of Javanese *gender* and musical knowledge over the past two hundred years?

In what follows I will briefly present some of the primary elements of *pathet* theory as described by Javanese musician and theorist, R.L. Martopangrawit, and then compare these to some *grimingan* pitch analysis. Despite protestations to the contrary by both Javanese male and female musicians, *grimingan* reflects modal gesture in much the same way that *suluk* melodies do. It turns out that the when *gender* players perform *grimingan*, the phrases they play imply the rules of *pathet* as they have been codified by Javanese music theo-

²⁰ See the description of Jayengraga and his friends performing *Gendhing Gambirsawit* from the *Serat Centhini* in Chapter V.

rists. Female *gender* players do, albeit tacitly, understand *pathet*. *Pathet* rules can be (and possibly were) derived from *grimingan* gesture and *grimingan* as a process and genre has been around longer than the articulated rules of music theory.

Finding 'pathet' in 'grimingan'

'As for *pathet*, I don't understand it', (*Nek pathet, ora ngerti*), was a common statement from *gender* players when I quizzed them on the topic. They usually suggested that I go and ask a conservatory graduate to explain it to me if I really wanted to know. When I tried to explain that I thought I could hear the expression of *pathet* rules in their *grimingan*, *gender* players often just shrugged their shoulders and turned to another point for discussion. Unphased by their lack of interest in my agenda, I have persisted because demonstrating that *grimingan* expresses *pathet* rules inverts many assumptions, common to both Javanese and non-Javanese musicians and musicologists, regarding musical knowledge and its sources, history, and development. Further, asserting that female *gender* players can perform *pathet*, even if they do not talk about it, removes a core element of the common, essentialist argument that suggests women musicians are not able to understand, hear, or play following *pathet* simply because they are women.

A good illustration of how Javanese theorists have approached the question of *pathet* is provided by the Javanese musician and theorist Martopangrawit who explores nearly every aspect of Javanese gamelan music in his *Catatan pengetahuan karawitan*, 'Notes on knowledge of gamelan music' in two volumes, originally published in Indonesian in 1972. These publications are primary, Javanese music theory texts.²¹ Martopangrawit presents an extensive exegesis on the strong and weak pitches or tones of each *pathet* (1984:45-65). By strong and weak tones, he is referring to the five notes in the *slendro* scale and how they relate to one another in each *pathet*. All *slendro* scale pitches are used in each *pathet*, but the strong tones in each *pathet* can be identified by the facts that: important phrases end on them; they appear in strong rhythmic locations in the middle of phrases; and, whatever the piece they are generally heard more often than the weaker pitches in the *pathet*. The *pathet*-trained ear can easily identify the *pathet* of a *gendhing*, *suluk*, or *grimingan* segment by listening to the contour of the *balungan* melody and the patterns chosen by the musicians playing the elaborating instruments.

Martopangrawit outlines the appropriate interpretation for each *seleh* or

²¹ Judith Becker and Alan Feinstein (1984-88) chose to begin their landmark English translation series of Javanese music texts with these Martopangrawit volumes.

ending note of a *gatra* as played by the *gender* in each *pathet*. The *gender* is played with two mallets and an arrival at the end of a *gatra* is usually marked by the simultaneous striking of two notes. Martopangrawit describes two kinds of intervals that the *gender* can play at the end of a *gatra*: a *kempyung* in which the two notes struck have two keys in between them and a *gembyang* in which the two notes struck have four keys in between them. (The former pair usually has an interval of a fifth or some kind of sixth and the latter always has an octave between them.) As Martopangrawit outlines it, in *pathet manyura* pitches 6 and 1 at the end of a *gatra* are played as *gembyang* and pitches 2 and 3 as *kempyung* with pitch 6 being the *dhong* tone, the pitch to which musicians will orient themselves in the mode. In *pathet sanga* pitches 5 and 6 are played as *gembyang* and pitches 1 and 2 as *kempyung* with pitch 5 as the *dhong* tone. In *pathet nem* pitches 2 and 3 are *gembyang* and only pitch 5 is *kempyung* with pitch 2 as the *dhong* tone.²²

Although Martopangrawit's description is primarily for the interpretation of *gatra* in *gendhing*, the relative weakness and strength of pitches in the modes is also heard in the *suluk* melodies and, significantly, in *grimmingan* melodies. There is clear modal correspondence between these genres in all *pathet*. The melodic contours of the *suluk* in *slendro pathet nem* have a preponderance of phrases that end on pitches 2, 3 and 5. Although the text changes, the last three phrases of nearly every *suluk* in *slendro pathet nem* are virtually the same melodically: the antepenultimate phrase starts on middle 5 and descends to low 5; the penultimate moves to middle 2; and the last phrase falls to low 3. These are followed by an instrumental ending that articulates the movement from *kempyung* 5, through 6 in either *gembyang* or *kempyung* to *gembyang* 2, that is particularly characteristic of *pathet nem*. It should be pointed out that most players, male or female and in either the old or new styles, will play the last low 2 in *gembyang* first and then, as a kind of cadential flourish in *kempyung*. All of these phrases fall within the parameters of *pathet nem* as described by Martopangrawit.

Grimingan in *slendro pathet nem* has a similar preponderance of phrases ending on pitches 5, 3, and 2, the strong tones in *pathet nem*. Based on a comparison of seventeen examples by nine *gender* players, some in recording sessions and some in live performance, there are recognizable mid-scale and large-scale similarities between the performances. So much so that it is possible to identify four different phrases, for the purposes of analysis labelled A, B, C, and D. The A phrase is generally exactly the same as the performer's version of the final instrumental phrase in *suluk* in the same mode, ending on low 2

²² Pitch 6 is part of both *pathet sanga* and *pathet manyura* and so *gatra* ending with pitch 6 in *pathet nem* should be treated with either the *sanga* or *manyura* interpretations depending on the melodic context.

and then cycling back to pause on pitch 6 from which the other phrases can begin. The B phrases generally begin with a short phrase to pitch 1 then gradually falling through 5 and low 3 to low 2 in *gembyang* and cycling through a condensed version of the A phrase. The C phrases begin in a manner similar to B gradually falling through 5 to low 3 but then diverging with a focus on pitch 6 in both *kempyung* and *gembyang* forms, finally moving through low 3 to low 2 in *gembyang*. The final D phrase begins with a repeated emphasis on pitch 1 moving to pitch 6, falling through 5 and low 3 to low 2 in *gembyang* and then, much like the instrumental final of *pathet nem suluk*, from 5 through 6 to 2.

There is clear modal correspondence between phrase endings and melodic pathways in *suluk* and *grimmingan* in *slendro pathet nem*. Similar correlation can be found between *suluk* and *grimmingan* in the two other modes, *slendro pathet sanga* and *slendro pathet manyura*. *Grimingan* in *pathet sanga* features the distinctive movement from pitch 6 falling down through pitch 2 to pitch 1 that is characteristic of the penultimate several phrases of most *suluk* in *pathet sanga*. *Grimingan* in *pathet manyura* features the distinctive movement from pitch 1 falling down through pitch 3 to pitch 2, a pattern that is characteristic of the penultimate several phrases in *suluk* in *pathet manyura*.

In each case the prominent pitches are those that are characteristic of the modes as described by Martopangrawit, with one exception each in *pathet sanga* and *pathet manyura*. Martopangrawit mentions pitches 5 and pitch 6 as important *gembyang* and *dhong* tones in *pathet sanga* and *pathet manyura* respectively. As I have described them, the basic flow of *grimmingan* phrases in *pathet sanga* misses the emphasis on pitch 5 and that of *pathet manyura* misses the emphasis on pitch 6, although these emphases can be heard in many *suluk* melodies in *pathet sanga* and *pathet manyura* respectively. The reason for this is that the pitch relations in the *grimmingan* for *pathet sanga* and *pathet manyura* reflect those found in the old melodies for two *suluk*: *Pathetan Sanga Wantah Lama* and *Pathetan Manyura Wantah Lama*. The old *suluk* melodies in *pathet sanga* generally focus on pitches 2 and 1 in *kempyung* and pitch 6 in *gembyang*, while old melodies in *manyura* generally focus on pitches 3 and 2 in *kempyung* and pitch 1 in *gembyang*. I say generally because in each case both of the pairs of notes usually in *kempyung* can also appear in *gembyang* in the performance of the old melodies. In other words, the strict rendering as *kempyung* of pitches 1 and 2 in *pathet sanga* and 2 and 3 in *pathet manyura* is something that has come about more recently, posterior to the creation of the old melodies.

These old melodies were familiar to the *gender* players involved in my study and they all either pointed out independently or agreed in conversation that *grimmingan* melodies in these two *pathet* were more similar to the melodies of old-style than new-style *suluk*. In addition, many *gender* players told me that while it was possible to play the *gender* parts for the new *suluk* melodies in either the male or female – urban or village, new or old – styles, both of

which they readily demonstrated, the *genderan* for the old melodies for *suluk* could only be played in the female, that is, old or village style.²³ *Grimingan* is relatively 'old' because of its distinctive connection to the old melodies for *suluk* and the fact that *grimmingan* melodies are usually performed in old-style *genderan*. Only one of the nine performers with whom I worked was willing to try to play *grimmingan* in new-style *genderan* and he thought it sounded odd. The others simply shook their heads and said it could not be done.

The acknowledged close relationship between *grimmingan* melodies and the old *suluk* melodies for *pathet sanga* and *pathet manyura* is interesting for our understanding of *pathet* for several reasons. It suggests that, as reflected in the theoretical writings of Martopangrawit, the codification of *pathet* that went on over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries involved some minor recasting of *pathet sanga* and *pathet manyura*, in particular the inclusion of one more important tone each: an emphasis on pitch 5 in *pathet sanga* and pitch 6 in *pathet manyura*. These additions most probably reflect the importance of those particular tones in the *gendhing* repertoire of the two *pathet* respectively. Indeed, there is a preponderance of pieces in *pathet sanga* and *pathet manyura* that have pitch 5 and pitch 6 respectively as the primary gong tone.²⁴ Modal movements in *gendhing* and *suluk* in *pathet nem* seemed not to have been extensively modified in the process of the codification of *pathet* rules. The subsequent creation of *suluk* melodies to reflect the importance of pitches 5 and 6 in *pathet sanga* and *pathet manyura* respectively – the *lagu baru* or new melodies – seems an obvious addition to the *suluk* repertoire, especially since these new melodies are far and away the mode pieces most frequently played at *klenengan* where the focus is on *gendhing* repertory rather than wayang and sung text, old or new. There is reasonable evidence to support this idea.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the urban courts there was a subtle and gradual shift in focus away from wayang repertoire to the performance of music without theatre, *klenengan*. This shift paralleled the creation of notational systems for Javanese music, the rise of the concept of 'high art' in Javanese musical performance, and the appearance of a new word to describe 'high art' musical performance, that is, *karawitan*. Sumarsam has written about the simultaneous development of these phenomena from the mid-nineteenth century. He notes a dramatic increase in interest in *karawitan*

²³ One of the major criticisms of the performance of female *gender* players is that they don't really understand when an arrival pitch should be *gembyang* or *kempyung*. For the knowledgeable old-style player, I suggest that this has less to do with their ability to understand mode than the fact that their impulses are based in the old understandings of *pathet*, as heard in the old *suluk* melodies, that allow for both *gembyang* and *kempyung* interpretations of several important pitches in *pathet sanga* and *pathet manyura*.

²⁴ It would be interesting to study the relative ages of the *gendhing* with gong tones 5 in *pathet sanga* and 6 in *pathet manyura*. I am unaware of any such study to date.

in the beginning of the twentieth century (Sumarsam 1995:102-30). He connects these changes with elite Javanese interest in European intellectual ideas and cultural trends. A large ensemble of musicians playing stately music in the courts was much more comparable to Western orchestral performance than the often rowdy performance of an all-night wayang. The performance of *karawitan* suited the formal day-time and early evening ceremonial events that Europeans attended in colonial Java. Wayang, itself, had already been theorized to some degree in Kusumadilaga's *Serat Sastramiruda* first published in the Javanese-language newspaper *Bramartani* in 1877-1878 (Sears 1996a:95-115). In that text there is no mention of the theory of *pathet* outside its function as a structural prop for wayang performance. This suggests that the development of an articulated modal theory came after the middle of the nineteenth century and was based on the shifts in performance practice I have just described. It is reasonable that the newly articulated theories of *pathet* would reflect the new court performance trends resulting in an emphasis on *pathet* as it functioned in *karawitan* – the high art music, the music most familiar to those articulating the rules for *pathet* – instead of wayang.

Conclusion

Grimingan is a solo *gender* genre said to capture the *rasa* of the wayang performance. The *rasa* resides in the *pathet* and *pathet* is evoked through the sound of the *grimmingan*. All Javanese performers – urban and rural – would agree that the cultural location of the *gender* has changed: the *gender* was once associated with wayang, with *pathet*, and with female performers; it is now associated with *karawitan*, with *pathet*, and with male performers. *Pathet* and *gender* are the linked constants in any construction. It is not coincidental that much of modern *pathet* theory as it is discussed and taught in the conservatories and courts is based on *gender* practice. Cultural constructions of performing *pathet* have also changed a little over time, moving from an intuited working out based on the *rasa* of the moment to a demonstration of an understanding of the rules inflected by *rasa* of the moment. Aesthetically inspired performances of either kind of *pathet* are described as *rasa*-full. As Bapak Moro, an old-style *dhalang* with court connections put it,

Actually, [the older *gender* players] feel the true *rasa*. Even though they don't, how to explain, yes, they don't yet know about the high art of Central Javanese music (*karawitan*), when you hear them play, it is as if they already understand.²⁵

²⁵ Sebenarnya, terasa bener-bener. Walaupun orang tidak bagaimana iya belum, belum mengenal tentang seni karawitan tapi mendengar itu saja sudah dia merasa. (Moro 7 April 1991.)

These old-style performers have not had professional reasons to obtain the knowledge of scholarly interpretations of *pathet*. That female musicians are women has also nothing to do with whether or not they can understand *pathet*. The *grimmingan* they play is suffused with *pathet* and, if it is played well, with *rasa*. As described briefly above, the articulated rules of *pathet* share much with the modal gestures of *grimmingan*. *Grimingan* is the performance genre most closely associated with female *gender* players and one that, because of its association with the old *suluk* melodies, was a likely feature of performance practice well before the articulation of the rules of *pathet*.

The *gender* has always been associated with *pathet*. What has changed is the gender of the musicians most usually associated with the *gender*. To understand how this change has come about it is necessary to move beyond theories based on essentialist interpretations of musical skill and capability. The changes discussed in this chapter reflect, in microcosm, large-scale cultural shifts in Javanese society that have gradually occurred since the late eighteenth century. In the following chapters I will explore the gendering of *rasa* by examining how gender in Central Java has been described and analysed. Then, after examining some of the mythological constructions of gender and comparing these with stories and myths about famous *gender* players, I will suggest that female *gender* players and the musical contexts in which they play represent a tangible link with older constructions of gender in Java. Developing an understanding of this cross-cultural pun – the intersection between gender and *gender* – provides significant insight into the larger, and much debated, topic of gender in Java and why *grimmingan* is so central to it.