

Gamelan Suprabanggo and Yale College New Music

Present

Music from Yale Composers For Javanese Gamelan

21 April 2010 – Beinecke Library 5:15pm

Program

<i><u>Ladrang Wilujeng Slendro Pathet Manyura</u></i>	Traditional
<i><u>O Sweet Spontaneous</u></i>	Ryan Harper
<i><u>Sturm und (La)drang</u></i>	Rex Isenberg
<i><u>Ladrang Pangkur Slendro Pathet Sanga</u></i>	Traditional
<i><u>Pangkur Reflection</u></i>	John Swisher and Friends
<i><u>Doorways</u></i>	Juraj Kojs and guest flautist Margaret Lancaster
<i><u>Oatmeal Pelog Cookies</u></i>	Nicholas Frankel

Gamelan Suprabanggo is:

Kathryn Alexander	Julian Berro	Nicholas Frankel	Ryan Harper
Lauren Holmes	Jessica Hsieh	Rex Isenberg	Juraj Kojs
Nathaniel Mattison	Jean-Luc Mosley	Ève Poudrier	Ian Rosenbaum
Mark Schwab	Benjamin Shirley	John Swisher	Sarah Weiss

with Margaret Lancaster, Flute and Piccolo

Gamelan Suprabanggo and Yale College New Music wish to thank:

The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, the Department of Music, the Friends of Music, the Southeast Asia Studies Council, the Yale College Dean's Office, Supanggih, Kris Mooseker, Linette Norbeau, Doreen Powers, and Jennifer Castellon

Composers' Notes

Ladrang Wilujeng Laras Slendro Pathet Manyura – Traditional

A piece from the traditional Central Javanese repertoire often performed at the beginning of events in order to ensure prosperity and good luck for all in attendance.

O Sweet Spontaneous — Ryan Harper

O sweet spontaneous, written for Javanese gamelan and electric guitar, is a setting of e e cummings's poem of the same name. The piece is written in a semi-traditional Javanese style, with a pre-composed *balungan*, or core melody, serving as the framework from which the elaborating instruments derive their parts. As a result, *O sweet spontaneous* is both through-composed and indeterminate. The piece is written in the *slendro* scale with the addition of *pélog* pitch 2.

Sturm und (La)drang — Rex Isenberg

The purpose of this piece is to explore some of the fundamental conventions of gamelan music by disturbing them selectively, juxtaposing deviant sections with music strictly in the Javanese style. In six sections, the intrigue of the piece is how selective alterations in some sections of the piece affect the elaborating and punctuating instruments, and how these altered sections could be made to seem natural among traditional forms.

Three of the sections are original compositions based strictly on Javanese forms and obey many of the constraints of Javanese compositional practice. However, the first section is comprised of alternating five- and seven-beat measures, lengths that do not appear in traditional Javanese music. I based the elaborating and punctuating parts for this section on Javanese tropes to retain a traditional feel, but expanded and modified them to fit the extended measure lengths. This creates a traditional sounding texture with an unconventional rhythmic structure.

Sections 2 and 4 are played in both scales simultaneously, which is unusual in Javanese music. Instead of simply composing a melody in which both scales are played at once, I composed a melody from the aggregate scale, alternating scales on every note in the second section and every measure in the fourth. The elaborating parts again behave conventionally, but borrow notes from both scales to accommodate the melody. Once again, by moderating the level of deviation from Javanese convention, I was able to retain a more traditional sound. Each section differs from the last in its degree of deviation from Javanese convention, but the overall arc of the piece scale-wise is from the five-note *slendro* scale to the seven-note *pélog* scale, and then back to *slendro*, with biscalar movements in between.

Composing this piece was a challenge, especially since I knew nothing about gamelan in September. As I began to understand this music better and the way in which it is constructed in Java both by playing in the ensemble itself and taking Professor Weiss' course in the fall, I quickly realized that none of my old composition tricks – lush harmony, thick chromaticism, rhythmic spontaneity, and colorful orchestration – were suited to this music or this ensemble. However, by forcing myself to start over and invent a new set of tricks for this piece, with conventions of Javanese form and function in mind, I not only discovered a new side of my compositional ability but also was able to write a truly unique piece that speaks to art of composition in both Java and the West.

I would like to thank Professor Alexander and Professor Klingbeil for their support for this project, and Professor Weiss for introducing me to gamelan, helping me fall in love with Javanese music, and advising me throughout the year on this project.

Pangkur Reflection – John Swisher

As the name suggests, this tune is inspired by the gamelan piece *Ladrang Pangkur* played briefly before mine. The head features a syncopated interpretation of the original *balungan* line, which becomes more embellished when repeated (alluding to the “elaborating instruments” of a gamelan ensemble such as the *gender* and *rebab*). The new harmonization permits use of pentatonic scales – approximations of the Javanese *slendro* scale – over parts of the solo form. While the tune references the basic melodic structure and cyclic form of the original gamelan piece, it also introduces new musical devices: freer improvisation, thicker harmonization, and heavier ornamentation.

Doorways – Juraj Kojs

in the shadow

in the light within

the cracks

majestic air

dancing, rustling, energizing

lies their truth and

lies their might

dedicated to Margaret Lancaster, Sarah Weiss and Yale Gamelan Suprabanggo

Oatmeal Pelog Cookies – Nicholas Frankel

Oatmeal Pelog Cookies explores some of the unusual polyphonic space of the *pelog* scale. It takes a brief look at three different types of harmonic texture that, to my ears, evoke the textures of three different types of oatmeal cookie: crispy, chewy and crunchy.

The piece also is an exploration of part-writing for the core instruments that typically play the same material in concert. Specifically, the *saron*, which typically carry the melody in unison, operate more like elaborating instruments in this piece by playing patterns of comparatively slow interlocking notes. As the piece moves back and forth between two of the harmonic cookie textures (crunchy and chewy), the rhythmic textures become more nuanced. The number of elaborations per beat, or *irama*, becomes more dense, leading the piece toward a crispy conclusion in which all the parts snap back into unison.

Brief Bios:

Nicholas Frankel is a second-year PhD student in the Department of Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology whose research involves noise in biological systems. In his spare time, Nicholas enjoys other types of noise. He has been a member of Gamelan Suprabanggo for two years, and composes electronic music on the side. *Pelag Oatmeal Cookies* is his first piece for gamelan, as well his compositional debut at Yale.

Ryan Harper is a senior in Branford College majoring in music and literature. His musical interests include the cross-pollination of various genres as well as the relationship between through-composition, indeterminacy, and improvisation. On campus, he sings with the Yale Glee Club, plays with the Yale Javanese Gamelan Ensemble, and writes music for an assortment of film and theater projects. He has studied music composition with Professors Kathryn Alexander, Michael Klingbeil, and Juraj Kojs.

Rex Isenberg is a senior music major in Calhoun College. He has been in several musical groups on campus, including the Yale Whiffenpoofs. His compositions have been performed widely, and he was one of two recipients of the 2008 Abraham Beekman Cox Prize, awarded by the Yale Music Department for promising students in composition. He is thrilled to continue his studies in composition at the graduate level next year at Manhattan School of Music. He is currently studying composition with Michael Klingbeil and Kathryn Alexander.

Juraj Kojs is a Slovakian performer, composer, producer, and educator residing in the US. He is a Postdoctoral Associate in Music Technology and Multimedia Art at Yale's Department of Music. Kojs also manages music and multimedia programs at Harold Golen Gallery in Miami, FL, which include the monthly 12 Nights of Electronic Music and Art concert series. Kojs' compositions have been featured at festivals and conferences in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. Kojs' works have received awards at Eastman Electroacoustic Composition and Performance Competition and the Digital Art Award. His articles have appeared in journals such as *Organized Sound*, *Digital Creativity*, *Leonardo Music Journal*, and *Journal of New Music Research*. www.kojs.net.

Margaret Lancaster has been described as a "new-music luminary" (The New York Times) and a "leading exponent of the avant-garde flute" (Village Voice). She has premiered well over 100 pieces and has built a large repertoire of new works composed specifically for her that employ extended techniques, dance, drama, multi-media and electronics. Performance highlights include Lincoln Center Festival, Spoleto Festival USA, Ibsen Festival, Santa Fe New Music, Whitney Museum, Edinburgh Festival and Festival D'Automne. She has recorded on New World Records, OO Discs, Innova, Naxos and Tzadik, and was selected for 'Meet the Composer's' New Works for Soloist Champions project. Noted for her interdisciplinary performances, Lancaster, who also works as an actor, choreographer, dancer, and amateur furniture designer, presents solo and chamber music concerts worldwide and acts in Lee Breuer's OBIE-winning Mabou Mines Dollhouse www.margaretlancaster.com.

John Swisher is a junior in Pierson College. A double major in Music and Mathematics/Philosophy, he is an assistant conductor of the Davenport Pops Orchestra. He plays piano in a jazz combo and is a clarinetist in the Yale Concert Band. He enjoys music of all sorts, reading and running.