

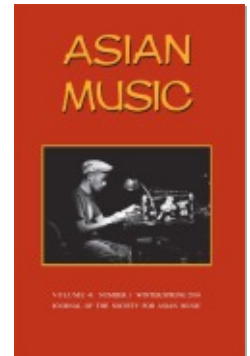


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Gamelan de Solo—Le jeu des Sentiments (A Garland of Moods)
(review)

Sumarsam

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Audio Recording Reviews

Gamelan de Solo—Le jeu des Sentiments (A Garland of Moods). Maison des Cultures du Monde, Inédit W 260125, 2006. Recordings supervised by Marc Benamou. Liner notes by Marc Benamou, with Rahayu Supanggah. Four compact discs.

Among audio materials of Javanese gamelan available to us, this new box set of four CDs stands out. The discs are well recorded, well packaged, and the most complete representation of central Javanese gamelan to date. Unlike past practice, nowadays one can produce a disc with longer liner notes. Marc Benamou and his co-planner Rahayu Supanggah take this advantage to its fullest extent. Their deep knowledge of the gamelan, expertise in Javanese singing and gamelan playing, access to local knowledge, and collaborative work have made it possible for them to write significantly long, insightful, and instructive notes, and to select the “right” repertoire for the CDs. The 60-page liner notes (in French and English) contain a well-written commentary on the performance context, theory, and practice of the music. The authors believe that melodic complexity and variety, contrapuntal depth, and formal sophistication make gamelan (like its Western classical counterpart) so appealing to people even when they encounter it for the first time (33). To that end, it makes sense that the authors write a long general commentary on the music and further commentary for each of the pieces. Including rather detailed musical technique, however, requires listeners to have intimate knowledge about gamelan in order to fully appreciate what is conveyed in the liner notes.

The first half of the liner notes covers succinctly all aspects of the gamelan: performance context, the functions of the instruments, musical procedures, treatment, and so forth. The authors emphasize the concept of *rasa* (mood, affect, faculty perception, inner meaning, deep understanding, intuition [34–5]) as central to listening to gamelan. In the discussion for each piece, the explanation on *rasa* is synchronized with the treatment and musical procedures of that piece. The tracking information indicated for each piece is very helpful for listeners to track down the section, transition, and given *rasa* while listening to a piece. It is rather unfortunate that the glossary of terms is too brief; a few of the definitions are misleading, and the poor-quality pictures taken from the movie shots during the recording session do not help to enhance the presentation. But the CD set

achieves its purpose: to guide non-Javanese (Western) listeners to appreciate the dynamic of multilayers of the music, and to enter the whole world of sentiment embodied in it (34).

Admittedly, simulating real-time gamelan performance to a disc is not possible; making compromises cannot be avoided. The fact that the recordings are electronically processed and made in a studio cause the loss of the informality and lively traditional music making (*klenengan*) atmosphere. Let's consider the following descriptions from the liner notes:

These are [the *klenengan*] typically held in someone's home, to which would have been invited a number of family guests—mostly male—who sit on the floor smoking, drinking tea and often passing around alcohol of some sort, and playing dominos or cards. Snacks would always be provided, and possibly a full meal of rice with meat and vegetable accompaniment. Such an evening usually begins around 8:00 p.m. and depending on the atmosphere, may go on as late as 4:00 a.m. Music would be provided throughout the evening, with pauses for the musicians to eat, drink, and chitchat. As the alcohol takes effect, the mood can become quite rowdy indeed, but for most of the evening the feel is relaxed and rather subdued. Typically a lot of teasing and flirting goes on between the usually male instrumentalists and the female vocalists, both musically and verbally. (36)

While it is not possible to duplicate this rowdy atmosphere on these discs, the musical treatment of "Gambir Sawit" and "Pangkur" (with *andhegan* and *senggakan*) come close. Other pieces—"Sinom Wenigonjing," "Palaran," "Subakastawa," "Gegot"—also create a lively atmosphere. Usually each of these pieces is played as a continuation of a larger piece (42). On the CD, these are presented individually, exemplifying certain genre and musical treatment. Noticeably, "Subakastawa" is presented in Ki Nartosabdhō's style: the melodies for the chorus and the treatment of the piece were created by this legendary puppeteer. In addition, "Gegot" is presented with new lines of singing and lyrics.

Loosely categorized, the CD set, recorded in Solo, contains three genres of repertoire: compositions for *klenengan*, dance, and *wayang*. Discs 1–3 contain genres of *gendhing* (compositions) for *klenengan* and dance, although only one dance piece is presented; CD 4 contains *wayang* repertoire. The liner notes rightly point out that the genre categories often overlap (37): the same piece can be played in *klenengan* and in accompanying *wayang* or dance. It is the treatment of the piece that distinguishes the presentation.

It is interesting that "Titipati" (disc 4, track 3) is grouped under music for *wayang* with a disclaimer that it is "too *bérag* (exuberant)" for the usual accompaniment of a scene in the women's quarter of an inner palace. In fact, the rendition of this piece, as explained well in the liner notes, is wholly *klenengan* treatment, employing *andhegan* (stops in the middle of the piece, resuming back to the piece after a brief interlude by the *pesindhen* singer), and the second

section is performed in *irama wilet* and *rangkep* (also with *andhegan*, and at times even including “naughty” treatment of certain passages led by the drummer). The above are not the treatments of *wayang* accompaniment. There are a few examples of *sulukan*, a song by the *dhalang* primarily to set and/or heighten the mood of a scene. For the other *wayang* music examples, an older *dolanan* (play song) is given, rather than a newer one, and its use for the clown scene is explained. Two most popular *jineman*, a genre featuring the melodic dexterity of the *pesindhen*, are also presented: “Uler Kambang” and “Gathik Glindhing.” About the latter, it was already mentioned in 19th century gamelan literature, thus was not composed by a recent musician as suggested in the liner notes.

This CD set indeed represents the richness in content of the style, musical treatment, and mood of the gamelan repertoires. A few pieces are highly attached to the court tradition (e.g., “Ela-Ela Kalibeber” and “Laler Mengeng”), but most pieces are well-known in and outside of the court. I have been using this set for listening assignments in my class on Indonesian music and theater, but I reconfigure the order of the pieces according to the needs of the class. For example, to simulate a typical *klenengan*, in which mood and *pathet* (modal) progression is an important aspect of the presentation, I choose the following pieces in order: “Kombang Mara,” “Titipati,” “Gambir Sawit,” “Jineman,” and “Pangkur.” I choose pieces with short *gongan* structure (“Gegot” and “Subakastawa”) to illustrate gamelan musical structure as well as to explain a variety of musical treatments and rhythmic variety. All in all, Marc Benamou and Rahayu Supanggah should be commended for producing this excellent gamelan box set.

Sumarsam

Wesleyan University

The Rough Guide to Bollywood Gold. (RGNET 1182CD). Selected by DJ Ritu and produced by World Music Network, 2007. Compact disc with notes and an extra data track interview with DJ Ritu.

Selecting 15 songs to represent the highlights of a musical genre with a 75-year history can be a daunting task, and to choose 15 from an estimated 75,000 Bollywood film songs produced between 1931 and the present would seem to be a Herculean one. British Asian DJ and BBC radio presenter DJ Ritu has, nevertheless, undertaken this challenge admirably, and not once but twice, having compiled both *The Rough Guide to Bollywood* (2002) and now *The Rough Guide to Bollywood Gold* (2007). For her first Bollywood compilation, DJ Ritu’s “instinct was to put together a dance-floor-oriented collection.” “Contractual complications” prevented her from realizing this vision, according