



ICTM Study Group on Performing Arts of Southeast Asia

HYBRIDITY IN THE PERFORMING ARTS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

**SILAT (MARTIAL ARTS) OF SOUTHEAST ASIA
CULTURAL STUDIES IN MUSIC AND DANCE
ARCHIVING AND DOCUMENTATION
NEW RESEARCH**



Proceedings of the 1st Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Performing Arts of Southeast Asia

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“The paper presented by Sumarsam exhibited a firm commitment to indepth musicological analysis of aspects of *gamelan* music, yet strongly connecting the music analysis to aspects of cultural studies, that is, the social and cosmological order of Javanese society.” (quoted from the abstract of Theme Four below).

THEME FOUR

CULTURAL STUDIES IN MUSIC AND DANCE

The intended format of this theme was a roundtable discussion on cultural studies and the analysis of music and dance, two different but complementary approaches to analysis found in the works of scholars today. Two case studies emerged during the call for papers, which were to form the basis for discussion to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches and to stimulate discussion on this theme of cultural studies in music and dance.

The Chair of the roundtable, Birgit Abels, titled this session of the Symposium 'Cultural Studies and Music/Dance Analysis: On the Utility and Futility of Postmodern Approaches to Southeast Asian Performing Arts'. In recent decades cultural studies increasingly have informed musicological and dance investigation, which has resulted in a substantial body of literature. Yet, an often-heard criticism, which voices many researchers' concern, is that by studying music from the perspective of cultural studies, such investigations often lose their focus on the actual objects of study, that is, the music and the dance. This roundtable sought to address the general question of the fruitfulness of cultural studies' approaches to our understanding of Southeast Asian music, dance and theater, and the benefits of transdisciplinary approaches to the region's performing arts.

A question to be addressed in this roundtable is, how can we as music, dance and theater researchers integrate cultural studies approaches into our analyses without neglecting the performing art forms themselves? Furthermore, how do we ensure that our consideration of these aspects of music and dance performance goes beyond merely adding fashionable jargon to musicological analyses, resulting in new wine in old skins? These and other related questions remain to be discussed by the Study Group.

With a personal emergency that prohibited the arrival of one of the speakers to this roundtable, only one case study was presented during the session. The paper presented by Sumarsam exhibited a firm commitment to in-depth musicological analysis of aspects of *gamelan* music, yet strongly connecting the music analysis to aspects of cultural studies, that is, the social and cosmological order of Javanese society. We are grateful to Sumarsam for concluding the Symposium with a very insightful and thought provoking presentation. The second case study, by Brigit Abels, discusses the relationship between the perception of space, concepts of travel, and the performing arts among the Sama Dilaut peoples of Borneo and Tawi-Tawi in the Sulu Archipelago. Although this session in the Symposium did not fully materialize as a 'roundtable', both papers are included in these Proceedings so that discussion may ensue among Study Group members both within and outside the PASEA Study Group meetings.

SUMARSAM
Wesleyan, U.S.A.

BINARY DIVISION IN JAVANESE GAMELAN AND SOCIO-COSMOLOGICAL ORDER

In the 1960s, ethnomusicology was commonly defined as “the study of music in culture” with emphasis on the anthropological approach, following Alan Merriam’s line of thought. Mantle Hood, however, emphasized the musicological side of ethnomusicology, as can be seen in his study of *patet* or modal classification in Javanese gamelan (Hood 1954). This anthropological-musicological divide was often described as the “Merriam-Hood split.”

Subsequently, a number of ethnomusicologists produced works attempting to find the points of intersection, causation, or “homologies” between Merriam’s three analytical levels (i.e., concept, behavior, and sound) (Rice 1987: 470). The works of John Blacking, Steven Feld, and Judith Becker, to mention just a few, represent this approach, bridging the split I just mentioned. This was also the period when ethnomusicology was defined as “the study of music as culture.” That is, the emphasis was on music processes as a reflection of cultural practice. Recently, Monson (2009) proposes a more encompassing definition, namely, the “interdisciplinary study of music as cultural practice.”

In the last four decades, the study of music and its relation to socio-cultural practices has vastly been expanding. One can get a sense of the wide trajectories of this study by reading a list of the titles of books and essays on this topic: “Sound Structure as Social Structure” (Feld 1984); “The Social Structuring of Sound” (Roseman 1984); *The Cultural Study of Music* (Clayton 2003); *Music Imagination and Culture* (Cook 1990); *Music, Culture, and Experience* (Blacking 1995); *Hearing Culture: Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity* (Erlmann 2004); *Music as Social text* (Shepherd 1991); *Music as Social life: The Politics of Participation* (Turino 2007); *Musical Improvisation: Art, Education, and Society* (Solis & Nettle 2009); *Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe* (Slobin 1996), and no doubt there are more.

Indeed this interdisciplinary expansion of ethnomusicology is very exciting. However, Monson feels that it is necessary to distinguish ethnomusicology from other studies (including cultural studies). She is leaning toward describing ethnomusicology as “the interdisciplinary study of music as cultural practice, in order to emphasize a practice-based anthropological conception of culture” (ibid. 22). This definition has a resonance to my present study. Monson divides this study into two groups: (1) Study that deals with music and the big social questions: power, ideology, hegemony, globalization, economics, modernity, history, colonialism, race, sex, gender, etc. (2) Study that investigates the act of making music and more local social issues such as the construction of communities, aesthetics, political resistance, kinship, and symbolic meaning (ibid. 21). My study falls under the second category.¹ Specifically, my paper revisits the study of gamelan as metaphor for social and cosmological order that has been proposed by Becker (1979) and Beckers (1981). I will expand the discourse by using “binary division” as a conceptual framework to explain the dynamism in musical and social interactions.