

The duty of gamelan

A gamelan pedagogue's philosophy of work

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ABSTRACT

The duty of gamelan. A gamelan pedagogue's philosophy of work

*This article is based on a thematic narrative study of a renowned Balinese gamelan musician's philosophy of work. The aim of the article is to illuminate a viewpoint towards music and musicking that might enrich basic thinking in Western music teacher education. The philosophy of work of the gamelan music pedagogue in this article is inseparably entwined with principles of Balinese Hinduism. Data for the study were gathered through a six-month stay in Ubud, Bali, and include interviews, video observations and field notes. The final discussion in the article is theoretically-philosophically informed by German philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer's thinking about *sensus communis* (Gadamer 2011/1975), German philosopher Martin Heidegger's thoughts about arts and human beings (Heidegger 2000) and British music philosopher Christopher Small's thoughts about musicking (Small 1996, 1987).*

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Introduction

'Everything is connected to a manifestation of God, and to the dualism of life. This is also the duty of gamelan.' (Tjokorda Raka Swastika)

The formal intentions of basic music education in Western societies are often articulated as *ear-based* education and as a source of *self-expression*, or even *existential experience*, without any explanation ever given for the terms¹. This article provides one, specific angle to illuminate such aims, as it explores a renowned Balinese

gamelan musician's philosophy of work. *Gamelan* is a traditional art form practiced in Indonesia, especially Bali and Java, combining music, dance and drama. The gamelan orchestra includes metal and wood percussion instruments, and also sometimes flutes, vocal and string parts. In contrast to many other forms of music, written scores are rare in gamelan music. Instead, both composing, learning and performing activities happen by ear, eye and memory only. Gamelan plays a significant role on the many religious occasions in Bali, for example, life cycle rituals and ceremonies at the temples (McPhee 1966). Gamelan is also performed for public audiences in several places². According to the research participant in the study to which this article refers, gamelan music is of intrinsic religious significance, as well as being an integral part of Balinese culture and daily life.

Balinese culture and gamelan music have been discussed in depth by anthropologists and musicians who have spent lengthy periods in Bali since the 1930s (Bateson & Mead 1942, Geertz 1973, 1966, McPhee 1979, 1966). The complexity of Balinese culture and gamelan music will not be explored in this article. Rather, its purpose is to shed light on main aspects of one legendary gamelan musician's philosophy of work. The example of how one, specific music educator reflects upon his work might be considered of significant value for knowledge and development in music teacher education in general (Angelo 2012, Krüger 2000, Nerland 2003).

The article has four parts. The first part provides information about the research design and methodological aspects of the study conducted. The second part presents the gamelan musician and teacher who was the research participant in the study, based mainly on interviews. The third part is a researcher's narrative, framed by one of this gamelan musician's teaching lessons. This text is mostly built upon video observations and field notes. The final part is a philosophical, theory-informed discussion of main aspects of this gamelan musician's philosophy of work, identified as three pivots: *the collective*, *repetition* and *dualism*. This discussion is informed by Hans Georg Gadamer's philosophy of *sensus communis* (Gadamer 2011/1975), Martin Heidegger's philosophy of art and human beings (Heidegger 2000) and Christopher Small's thoughts about *musicking* (Small 1996, 1987). In conclusion, I point out aspects of the findings presented in this article that might deepen basic thinking about music, musicking and music education in Western music teacher education.

Research design

The study that this article refers to was conducted through a thematic narrative approach (Riessman 2008). Data were gathered during a six-month stay in Ubud, Bali, where I visited the research participant at his workplace and home several times. I observed and videotaped four hours of teaching, conducted two interviews, and wrote field notes on our informal conversations related to the research subject. All of this work took place at the Ubud Royal Palace, where the research participant lives and often teaches his foreign students. I also attended a gamelan performance there, performed by some of his former students. The field notes also include reflections I wrote during and after this performance.

There exist different kinds of narratives in the data materials gathered; verbally-articulated narratives and narratives performed through teaching actions. Combining such diverse sources of information may be regarded as favourable for a narrative analysis (Riessman 2008:26). The definition of narrative varies in methodological literature (Clandinin 2006, Riessman 2008). My definition relies on Riessman's, who consider narrative not simply as factual reports of events, but instead as "one articulation told from a point of view that seeks to persuade others to see the events in a similar way" (Riessman 2008:187). After defining a number of such narratives in the interviews, observations and field notes, I moved across these to identify main themes, or pivots, that the research participant consistently returns to – in his teaching practice as well as in the interviews and our informal conversations. These main themes; the collective, repetition and dualism, comprise the leading threads in the researcher's narrative, which follows after the presentation of the research participant. The reasons for calling the themes *pivots* are both to underline a philosophical standpoint that dynamically aims to follow the research participants thoughts down his trails, without pre-boxing the insights in categories as "phenomenological" or "sociocultural", and also to emphasize how these themes are not static, but aspects that are constantly moving and therefore also making motion in this pedagogues practice. The pivots are thus themes that this research participant practice both circles *around*, and are rotated *by*³.

Narrative research is evolving in social studies as well as in the humanities (Barrett & Stauffer 2009, Clandinin 2006, Pinnegar & Daynes 2006, Riessman 2008). In the field of music education, narrative inquiries are held to provide possibilities to consider "multiple stories, multiple voices, and multiple meanings of music and musicking" (Barrett og Stauffer 2009:19). As Norwegian music pedagogues Petter Dyndahl and Live Weider Ellefsen point out; what is regarded as "music" and what is regarded as "music teaching" depend on specific cultural and social settings (Dyndahl & Ellefsen

2009). Diverse cultural contexts may be found, not only in Norway and Bali, but also in jazz education and French horn education, or instrumental teaching in a wind band environment (Angelo 2012). For music teacher education, it is of fundamental value to consider what is emphasized in music education, in *diverse* music-education practices. Narrative approaches can provide a good way to explore that. One main benefit that is often underlined is that narratives provide a way to preserve the complexity, dynamics and tensions that characterize professional practices, i.e., teacher practices, or artist practices (Barrett & Stauffer 2009, Clandinin 2009).

My methodological and philosophical standpoint in this article is *reflexive* (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009), and positioned in what Barrett and Stauffer discusses as *resonant work* (Barrett & Stauffer 2009). In short, this means work where several interpretations are welcomed, and work that aims to resonate in the field where the work has been conducted, namely, in the field of music teacher education. Barrett and Stauffer propose four main criteria for “resonant work”. The work is supposed to be conducted (1) *respectfully*, (2) *responsibly* and (3) *rigorously*, in accordance with the research participant and his/her field of knowledge, as well as in accordance with the researcher, and his/her research context. Further, resonant work should be (4) *resilient*, which means that it should be written in a way that forcible and sustainable provides meaning and touch the reader.

The Gamelan Pedagogue

The research participant in this study is gamelan master Tjokorda Raka Swastika (henceforth referred to as Raka) of the Ubud Royal family, born in 1955. Raka is an accomplished musician who has played with and taught many of the best orchestras in Bali. He now gives courses in many different styles of Balinese gamelan, among these the renowned style *gong kebyar*. Gong kebyar is characterized by its explosive changes in dynamic and tempo. The term “Kebyar” is differently defined in diverse sources, for example explained as a sudden flash or the moment when a flower bursts into a blossom, or as Christopher Small puts it in verbs, as “to flare, to burst in to flame” (Small 1996:41). As a gamelan musician, teacher and composer who is recognized in Bali as well as internationally, Raka has visiting students from countries such as Australia, Japan, Holland, Denmark, Norway and England.

Raka grew up in Ubud with parents who were both deeply engaged in music and dance – his father as a recognized gamelan musician, his mother as a dancer in the Balinese opera known as *Arja*. Raka was fascinated by gamelan music from a young

age. He began hanging out at rehearsals and performances of a gamelan *seka* (club or society) when he was only five or six years old. Together with his friend, I Wayan Rai S. – who is now the Principal of the Indonesian Institute of Art (ISI), with a PhD in Gamelan – Raka was accepted as a member of a gamelan group by the age of 13. Raka and Rai were the youngest members of this group, and it was quite extraordinary to include people of such a young age in an orchestra. Children’s gamelan groups did not exist in Bali at that time. It was only much later, in the late 1980s, that Raka became engaged in establishing and developing both children’s and women’s gamelan groups. Before that, children usually were strictly forbidden to use the gamelan instruments of the community, since these were a source of pride and of sacred value. As a child though, Raka took part in a great many rituals and ceremonies, and in some of them, children were both allowed and encouraged to play with diverse instruments/sound makers. For example, during Galungan and Kuningan (the Balinese holiday that occurs every 210 days and lasts for 10 days), children both played instruments and helped to make and lead the Barong (a huge, mythological, lion-like creature who protects the community from evil).

Raka and Rai were invited to be part of the gamelan group *Sadha Budaiya* at the age of 13 because of their remarkable talent. This group gathered the best musicians from 12 banjars (customary residential hamlet community) of Ubud village, and is a group that still exists. ‘I was so happy,’ Raka says, ‘to finally be allowed to express myself, and develop in gamelan. This was my greatest hobby and a heartfelt interest.’ Raka played the *gangsa* (a two-octave metallophone with resonators) and Rai became the musical leader. When Rai left to study abroad, Raka took over the musical leader position and started to learn other instruments in addition to the *gangsa*.

During his junior high school years, Raka joined the school gamelan group as an extracurricular subject. His school had different extracurricular activities such as fine arts and sports, and students were supposed to choose subjects related to their talents. Raka also joined sports, as he enjoyed tennis, badminton, soccer and basketball. In senior high school, he became the trainer of this gamelan group. Thus, he was employed as a gamelan teacher when he was still an adolescent.

After high school, Raka studied English at a university, and kept gamelan as a hobby. He played with groups in his community, but never pursued academic studies in music, as his friend Rai did. After completing his English studies, Raka worked as an assistant teacher in junior and senior high school. He taught English as well as tourism and history, and spent ten years as a teacher. The headmaster of the school where he was employed knew about his gamelan skills, and asked him to establish a group for the school as a kind of (unpaid) social work. In Bali, few public schools offer gamelan music as extra-curricular subjects, even in 2012. Raka estimates that

gamelan extra-curricular is available at about 10% of all the schools, mostly secondary schools, and a handful of primary schools. This depends upon teacher resources, and the gamelan teachers are usually local community people. Most of these extra-curricular gamelan activities, though, focus on dance, which requires fewer resources than music. For example, no instruments are needed, because the teacher can use a CD or DVD, and also, one teacher can teach many students, whereas in music the number of students per teacher is more limited.

Raka never received any formal teacher education, but got the position because the school lacked teachers. Reflecting on this, he underlines that sometimes autodidacts and formally educated people can offer different things. Broad knowledge *about* a topic is different from narrow knowledge based on experience. A formally educated musician might know many things about gamelan, but he/she does not necessarily know how to play. Instead, the competence to play gamelan requires experience and lots of practical training. Raka refers to himself as an autodidact, meaning that he has learnt to play and teach gamelan without any formal schooling. Still he has undertaken serious and guided training, according the tradition, as he started his gamelan education at the age of five, first by observing and then joining his local gamelan group.

Understanding gamelan is not only scientific, but also deeply practical. According to Raka, it is not possible to learn the scales, tuning and strokes without actually *doing* them. Balinese gamelan has no notation system for musicians to use when they perform. There is a basic system to remember the main body of the composition, but this is only for the musical leader. The musical leader therefore needs to *know* all the instruments, and all the parts by heart. The leader of a gamelan group also teaches the parts to all the musicians, who have to remember their own parts. Usually the leader plays the *kendang* (two-headed drum), or the *ugal* (lead metallophone of the *gangs*a family), in the orchestra. During performances, the musical leader gives the cues and energy for the compositions. The knowledge needed for this work has to develop through practical training, not through scientific studies about gamelan, Raka says. This is hard work, and one has to be patient.

Raka tells about how he recently learnt to play the rebab (a two-stringed lute from the traditional gamelan that few contemporary gamelan musicians know how to play). This took a long time and much practice. It was hard to learn the finger movements properly, and also, how to listen correctly. 'One time I broke a rebab!' he admits, 'I just crashed it to the floor. I was so frustrated!' After that he learnt to be patient, and to develop step by step.

During the 1990s, Raka was employed as an instructor for several groups that perform at various temple and art festivals today. Some of the groups he trained have achieved very good reputations and won awards in competitions. He regards his

employment as a gamelan teacher both as a personal responsibility and as a way to earn an income to support his family. When I ask him how he approaches beginning education in gamelan, for example, for a group in a banjar, he responds: 'first we have to choose a good day. The first day must be an auspicious day,' he starts, and then explains how this is related to the Balinese Pawukon calendar. The first day needs to be carefully chosen, among the various kind of weeks and days. 'Timing,' Raka emphasizes, 'is very important.' Choosing a proper day is both about giving "soul to the gamelan", and about preserving "the duty of gamelan" as Raka puts it. It is also regarded as an important factor to support the continuity of the group. Starting a gamelan group on an inauspicious day carries a risk that the group will not continue playing together.

'First, I introduce the notation: ding, dung, deng, dang, dong.' These are the names of the five tones in the pelog scale. Every one of these tones has their own duty, and is a manifestation of God. Divine manifestation is a main aspect of Balinese society as a totality; everything is connected to something sacred. Connection to God, and to the dualism of life, is crucial in order to experience love, be well, be respectful, and other good things that, as Raka underlines, "are hard to measure". This connection to the sacred is also a duty of gamelan, according to Raka.

Following from this, Raka also considers it his duty, as a teacher of foreign students, not only to teach them how to play gamelan, but also to provide them with knowledge about, and respect for, Balinese culture. 'Every day the tourists come here,' he says, pointing to the Ubud Palace area. 'They don't always have the right information, even though people from diverse places have told them different things.'

Once the group has learnt the notation, the next step is the basic strokes, and then the diverse kinds of strokes. In Western music such strokes may be referred to as half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes, sixteenth notes. These strokes, and how they relate to each other, are also connected to the diverse instruments in the gamelan orchestra. 'And, after that, I build the song,' Raka concludes. The "building of the song" is about providing the structure of the song to the group, meaning the main body of the song, with its diverse strokes and melodies. Everyone in the ensemble is supposed to know the main structure of the composition, and the education for this is highly structured. The lines are either four, eight or sixteen beats long. 'A main purpose of gamelan education is to recognize this system, and to learn to anticipate together. That's the music,' Raka says, 'everyone will know their own space, their own place in the music.' Still, knowing the different parts does not complete the education. Raka stresses that the movements, if dance or puppets are involved, are also of great importance, and underscores how this sometimes can change the music. These changes are to be noticed, and marked, by cues from the leader (usually the drummer) of the ensemble.

Then, there is repetition, repetition and repetition. Everything is remembered by ear, or maybe also by visually memorizing the sequence of hand movements. 'We get used to this in Bali,' Raka says, 'to repeat and repeat. This has many aspects too.' He explains how the repetition is not only about technique, but also about "rasa" – the feeling / mood. This, Raka explains, is connected to the heart, 'in the same way that the heart is connected to the sun.' He underlines how the language of the heart is different from mere feeling and experiencing, how it is a sense of its own. This sense is related to the mood, although it is not the same as the mood. Rather, this sense has to do with being in pure contact with the heart.

The language of heart is open to a wide range of interpretation, and hard to explain verbally. It also depends on which corner you want to be in, whether you want to face God, people, or the environment. There exist three causes of goodness, or Tri Hita Karana. Raka explains, and this concept has also to do with different ways to be respectful. Respect can be directed three ways: (1) from human beings to God. 'We always perform blessings first, before we perform on the instruments,' Raka says. This is important in gamelan, in order to access power, purity, happiness, respect, and the abilities to hear and play the music. Respect can also be directed (2) from human being to human being. Thus, gamelan musicians may bring happiness, love, joy and peacefulness to other people. Respect can also be paid (3) from human beings to the environment (environment broadly understood to encompass the natural world, and all the beings in it, as well as specific situations and locations).⁴

The teaching is done in a mirror-image position, by sitting in front of the student and playing the same gangsa from the opposite side of the instrument. It would be like playing a piano keyboard in reverse, sitting behind the keyboard. Raka admits that this can be quite difficult. 'We also hope the students can practice on their own,' he says. Sometimes gamelan groups give beginners the keys to the rooms where the instruments are kept, so they can practice in between lessons. The most important thing to learn is the melody, then the rest of the structure follows.

Raka goes on to explain how there are three general contexts for gamelan and dance in Bali: (1) creative gamelan; (2) sacred gamelan, especially for ceremonies, and not allowed to be performed for the public, for example, shadow puppet performances, in which the puppets may give human beings a message from God; and (3) performances for the public. This is entertainment, although it is still connected to the gamelan philosophy, and some compositions are duplicates from the sacred gamelan repertoire.

Historically there is no standard tuning in the Balinese gamelan orchestra. Each set of instruments making up any village gamelan is tuned in its own way, according to the instrument maker's ear and understanding of the Balinese gamelan scales, slendro

and pelog. Although standard tuning exists in some places now (since mid 1980s), the tuning varies from one village to the other. This makes many songs learnt in specific villages difficult to recognize on the instruments played in other villages. There are, however, standard compositions that are played all over Bali, and the learning is based on which note is the first in the scale on the instrument, not on how it sounds.

Raka also explains that each gamelan has two pairs of drums, and underlines that this is related to the underpinning philosophy of dualism in Balinese Hinduism. 'In Balinese philosophy we always think in dualistic terms,' he says, 'for example, Night-Day, Black-White, Male-Female, Good-Evil. This is also important in the gamelan, for example, there are always two kendangs; one represents the male and one, the female.'

Above all, gamelan instruments are sacred, and a source of pride. One is not allowed to step over them, to leave the equipment somewhere, or to split up the instruments. Everything in the orchestra must be kept together. One day every six months, due to the Balinese calendar, there is a special day for gamelan; *krulut tumpek*. On this day, gamelan musicians meet to pray for the gamelan instruments to be blessed, and connected to the Divine. Smaller blessing procedures for the instruments also occurs before every performance or ceremony. These things are one of the firsts that new gamelan students learn.

Researcher's narrative: Gamelan Education

Ubud Palace garden is crowded with tourists from all over the world, strolling about and having a look. It is a hot day. In the middle of the garden, on a platform with a fully equipped gamelan orchestra, Raka and his Norwegian student⁵ sit in yoga position on either side of the *gangs*. 'The tones are ding, dung, deng, dang, dong,' the teacher sings, and illustrates on the instrument. He plays a phrase, and the student copies it. They repeat the same line, over and over again, till the student has learnt it. 'Wow, You're fast!' Raka proclaims, and especially honours the way that the student manages the damping. Tourists keep mingling. Some of them pause, take pictures, and listen for a while, before they continue to other parts of the courtyard. This is a usual teaching area for Raka, and all these people taking part in the lesson do not distract him. This is the way that gamelan music is taught – in everyday life, with all sorts of people around.

The first task is to learn the main body of the composition. Raka demonstrates, and the student repeats. The main body include all the melodic parts,

the musical bridges, and the *koteken* (interlocking parts). It also includes the rhythmic interplay characteristic of the Balinese gamelan.

Emphasizing things in the music that are specifically significant to Balinese gamelan (as opposed, say, to Javanese gamelan), such as tempo or texture, is of great importance to Raka. He puts effort to provide such information in his teaching, and hopes that also the many tourists milling around will get a notion of “real Balinese gamelan” from his examples.

The teaching process continues, and Raka progressively adds different parts of the composition into his student’s playing. For example, he marks the gong-beats by singing; “gong” in certain places, to help the student get an idea of how the melodic phrase works within the total composition. ‘You know, in gamelan, it is the totality that is the quality,’ Raka says, ‘you have to know your part in relation to all the others, to really be able to anticipate. The orchestra therefore always has several instruments of the same kind, with a little difference in the sound quality – this is to make the tone richer.’

The student remarks that this is quite different from his background, as a symphonic orchestral musician, where it usually is enough knowing your own part. Raka explains how finding one’s own place within the totality is part of the whole philosophy of Balinese life. Individuality may not be as emphasized here as in Western ways of thinking, because people are in this world first and foremost *together*. This also is part of gamelan philosophy, for example, in the *rhythmic* aspects: ‘You have to know *where* to listen and to anticipate the beat,’ Raka says, and explains how Balinese music is cyclical, and can be in four-, eight- or sixteen-beat cycles. ‘Everybody must listen to the *kendang* because this is the instrument that *decides* the rhythm. The *ceng-ceng* (cymbals), the *tawa-tawa* (a small gong), and the *kempur* (middle-sized gong) connect to the *kendang* to make the rhythm unit. This is the foundation of the gamelan music.’ Raka and his student continue the lesson – the teacher illustrating, the student imitating. It becomes progressively more complicated, with diverse other instruments (imagined) entering the composition that evolves in the Ubud Palace garden.

The hot air is quivering, and a crowd of people are following the lesson. Soon there is time for a break, although Raka continues to talk. ‘A main thing in our principle of life is the dualism,’ he says, leaning back, ‘for example the

dualism between good and evil.' He gives the example of how both good and evil exist in the world, how their dualism is fundamental, and how they rely on each other. 'Without evil there could never have been any good,' he concludes.

Then he stands up, and brings his student around to show and tell about the different instruments in the orchestra. He explains the principle of polarity again by showing how the orchestra is divided into two parts, facing against each other, with always two or more instruments of each kind. These fulfil each other, and provide a rich tone. The rhythmic melody-giving *gangsa*, are divided into three groups: *kantilan* are the highest, *gemade* is in the middle, and *ugal* are the lowest. The function of this part of the orchestra is to play the rolling rhythmic interlocking parts, or *koteken* – the most audible trademark of Balinese gamelan music. The *koteken* have two complementary rhythmic parts: *polos* and *sangsi* (on-beat/off-beat). Like the *gangsa*, the *kendang* too keep this interlocking on/off beat rhythm. The *pitch* is also related to dualism, with one pitch a fraction lower than the other – so that they together make a wave. 'One instrument alone can't make this wave in pitch,' Raka explains, 'there have to be several.'

Raka and his student have completed the lesson for today, but will meet again tonight. Then the student will join Raka at a ceremony, which is also about good and evil, with a Barong and a Rangda to be battled. At this ceremony, one of Raka's youth gamelan ensembles will be playing.

Discussion

Based on a thematic, narrative analysis of the data collected, I have identified three pivots in Raka's philosophy of work as a gamelan music pedagogue: *the collective*, *repetition* and *dualism*. The following discussion is concentrated around these pivots, with examples of how these are expressed in Raka's practice. Theoretically this discussion reflects upon Gadamer's thoughts on *sensus communis*, Heidegger's philosophy of art and human beings and Small's thoughts on *musicking* (Gadamer 2011, Heidegger 2000, Small 1996, 1987). In conclusion, I point out how this discussion may enrich fundamental thinking about music education in Western music teacher education.

The collective

In Western art, the individual and individuality are often regarded as the cornerstone for artistic expression. As Norwegian researcher Per Mangset (2004) puts it, the artistic parish might be about self-realisation, to reveal personal potentials, which can be both a sacrifice and thrilling (Mangset 2004). However, in Raka's philosophy of work, individuality is not the key. Instead, gamelan is about a *sense of collectiveness*, which affects the whole of life, for individual persons and for society. Quality in gamelan is considered to depend upon an ensemble's ability to play *as one*. All the musicians have to play as one – one soul or one person on the diverse instruments. This implies that everyone needs to know what the others are supposed to play, and to anticipate the next movement in the music, as part of the collective.

Inspiration too is considered to be a collective matter. Art philosopher Jean Couteau (2011) points out the importance of "taksu" as an aspect of inspiration for art in Bali, and how this contrasts with the individual focus that often exists in Western societies:

In Western and modern Indonesian art, inspiration is a personal phenomenon, which combines knowledge, feeling, and will, and reveals itself as an expression of the subconscious combined with adequate control of the ego. Behavioural traits specific to the individual artist are paramount. In Bali this understanding is turned upside down. Instead of being rooted in the individual, inspiration is deemed to derive from otherworldly sources. Called *taksu*, a Balinese word derived from Sanscrit *Caksu*, or (cosmic) eye, it is believed to issue from cosmic forces that temporarily 'perch' (*inceg*) on individuals. By its very nature, *taksu*, is fickle and must be nurtured lest it find another perch (Couteau 2011: 24).

The absence of a written score in gamelan music also reinforces collectiveness. Because there are no written scores, everything is learnt by ear and committed to memory, so that all the musicians know the composition and its diverse parts, without having to read a score. This leads to a focus that is directed *into* the ensemble, and *into* the collective music making. Raka explains that all kinds of art, including gamelan, can be regarded as the God's messages to human beings. This means that humans, through the art experience, get messages that are true, and that are intertwined within a greater Being, which coincides with Couteau's observations that religion, art and society harmoniously meet in Balinese art (Couteau 2011:22). Raka further underlines how the *sense* of the gamelan player, among other things, has to do with a consciousness of being a human in this world, related to other human beings, Gods,

and the environment. Gamelan, then, is also about what is right and wrong, and also even *possible*, for human beings to do, to feel, and to think.

This resonates with German hermeneutic philosopher Gadamer's concept of *Bildung* (Gadamer 2011). According to Gadamer, human being is not something one is born to, but something one constantly strives to become, through the process of *Bildung*, which is a German word that carries the notions of both a travel and an ideal image. The process of *Bildung* is for Gadamer deeply related to society, and to a sense of community that he calls *sensus communis* (op.cit :17 ff.). *Sensus communis* is of fundamental meaning in human life and entails – coinciding with Raka's thoughts about the *sense* of gamelan – a sense of what is right and wrong, and what is necessary for existence as a group. It is rooted in the mutual recognition, feelings, spiritual and moral aspirations of those involved, and also have religious undertones. In his discussion about the rise of the word *Bildung*, Gadamer explains how this evokes 'the ancient mystical tradition according to which man carries in his soul the image of God, after whom he has fashioned, and which man must cultivate himself' (op.cit: 10)

Thus, the philosophy of music education in this gamelan pedagogue's work provides a point of departure to explore how music education might become a practice of *Bildung* – one which departs from a collective *sense* within humans in a group about what is right and what is wrong, and which ideals are the best to strive to reveal.

Raka underlines how art is connected to truth, and how gamelan might be regarded as a path to explore oneself, and one's place in the world: 'If you try to find out about yourself in the world, you can do that through art,' he says, 'this can be about yourself, your world, your character, how to be respectful and about your position, for example to find a solution in a debate.' This tangled interconnectedness between art and truth is underlined in German philosopher Martin Heidegger's writings on art and human beings, in which he discusses how art activity may be a way to know oneself and one's own world, and to reveal real truths about one's own being, as well as the greater Being (Heidegger 2000). In Raka's terms, this Being is deeply collective.

In a study of a Norwegian jazz pedagogue's philosophy of work, I also found a notion of music as a way to reveal truths (Angelo 2013). A main difference is that in the jazz pedagogue's philosophy of work, this process is about the individual, about revealing personal potential within oneself (ibid.). Whereas in the gamelan pedagogue's, the core truth seems to be a collective one, namely a *sensus communis*.

Following from this discussion, music is not properly regarded as a *thing* in gamelan practice (i.e. a composition, an instrument, a composer), even though it is that too. More important is the fact that gamelan *does* something, to people in an environment, and is inhabited by a greater Being. And in Raka's view, one of the most important things that music does is to bring true insights about oneself and the world, reveal

what is good and what is not, and how to behave with others, and towards the Gods. In a similar vein, Small (1996, 1987) turns the Western recognition of music as a noun upside down, and claims that it would be better to consider music as a verb, and as an activity in which humans engage:

My first assumption is that music is not primarily a thing or a collection of things, but an activity in which we engage. We might say that it is not properly a noun at all, but a verb; the absence of a verb in English, as in most European languages, to express this activity is significant, and may point towards the European attitude to the making of music, which I discussed in the previous chapter. Certainly the conceptual gap is interesting. I intend using, in this book, from now on, the verb 'to music' (after all, one can say 'to dance' so why not?) and especially its present participle, '*musicking*', to express the act of taking part in a musical performance (Small 1987:50).

In his discussions about musicking, which is partly informed by his studies in Bali, Small underlines how musicking brings ideal societies, and ideal relationships, into existence;

Musicking creates the public image of our most inwardly desired relations, not just *showing them to us* as they might be but actually *bringing them into existence* for the duration of the performance (Small 1987:69–70).

Such relations, in Small's thoughts, might be relations between human beings, relations inside oneself, or relations to something greater. Raka articulates how gamelan might be a way to such relations, in accord with the values of the collective in Balinese society, and in Balinese Hinduism. 'Human beings are in this world together,' he says, and underlines how this involves relationships to other humans as well as to the Gods and to the environment – all of which seem to be explored, and brought forth, in the gamelan playing.

In the introduction to this article, I wrote that cultural diversities in music education could relate to diverse genres and instruments, or particular institutions, such as wind bands or symphonic orchestras as well as foreign traditions and cultures. Public images of "our most inwardly desired relations" then, could also be brought forth differently, for example in jazz education, education related to a specific instrument traditions, gamelan education, and so on.

This is an important aspect for trustworthiness, and for ethical considerations for music education teachers – that educate music teachers within variously styles of musics.

Repetition

Repetition marks the second main pivot in Raka's practice. He returns to the same issues repeatedly in our conversations about his teaching, as well as in the observed teaching lessons. As illustrated in the researcher's narrative, repetition is a main path to learning: the master demonstrates, and the pupil imitates – over and over again until the duplicate is the same as the original. Then the teacher adds other aspects; for example, he plays other parts of the composition together with the lines that his student has just learnt. A good art student in Balinese tradition, is, as Couteau puts it, a student who does no more than to faithfully reproduce his guru's technique. Neither improvisation nor improvement are either encouraged or valued (Couteau 2011:27). The expression is already given, and the task is to duplicate this, neither more nor less. A guru, Couteau underlines, mediates and literally *embodies* the knowledge (ibid.). By imitating the guru, then, the students might double this embodied knowledge, which, as elaborated previously, is not only about the *sound* of gamelan, but also the *sense* of gamelan.

Gamelan music has a cyclical form, which could be seen as an opposition to Western music, which most often has a linear form. Cyclical forms are based on repetition. The patterns are repeated many times, forming a continuous cycle with many ostinatos. The principle of cyclical repetition is central to Balinese Hinduism too, for example, in beliefs about reincarnation. It also manifests in the way Balinese are named: the first-born child is named Putu or Wayan, the second, Made or Komang, the third, Nyoman or Kadek, and the fourth, Ketut. If there is a fifth child, he or she is named Putu or Wayan – it starts from the top again. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz uses this as an example to support his argument that Balinese culture is an “de-personalizing” culture, because of the marginal role of the individual in life and society (Geertz 1973:390). Although I am not sure I agree with that observation, it is easy to see how the pivot “repetition”, together with the pivot “the collective”, might lead a Westerner to conclusions in that direction.

Practicing (by nature, repetitive) is a main aspect of music education in Western, classical, instrumental tradition. For hours each day, the musician or musician-to-be spends time alone in the practice room to perfect skills and scales. Norwegian music philosopher Even Ruud (1983:132–140) points out how basic thinking about *practice* should be turned from considering this activity as a merely boring and exhausting activity, to considering it as an aspect of life that is deeply rooted in the phenomenon of

being human. Ruud (ibid) draws upon German philosopher Otto Bollnow's thoughts on existential philosophy and pedagogy, underlining how the latter's idea of practice, as an activity that is necessary to keep developing as a human being, could enrich, deepen, and infuse meaning into the activity of practice in music education (Bollnow 1978, 1969).

The role of repetition in the philosophy of music education identified in Raka's practice provides a fresh perspective on these near-forgotten ideas. As shown above, practice in Bali is anything but solitary. It happens together with others, and it is about grasping for and developing a sense of the good, which is deeply rooted within society. Then, there is repetition, and doing things as well as possible, always even better than the last time. The practice is not only about perfecting the sound of gamelan (which would be a technical approach). It is also about affirming membership in a society where repetition together is a fundament, and is never seen as anything other than something positive.

Dualism

Dualism is identified as the third main pivot in Raka's practice, and it too reflects a pillar in Balinese Hinduism. Here, everything is about the polarity between good and evil. Since God is in everything, God is both good and evil. This polarity is a fundament of the philosophy of life as well as the philosophy of gamelan. In the researcher's narrative it was emphasized how the Balinese *kendang* is always doubled, one male and one female. The gamelan orchestra too is divided into two, left and right. A main aspect of the rhythm in gamelan is the *polos* (onbeat) and the *sangsi* (offbeat). Another main aspect is the pitch, and the tone quality. Since one tone alone cannot provide the richness that is necessary, there must always be several instruments playing the same part, to give the texture that is needed. There also exist two types of scales, *slendro* and *pelog*, where the *slendro* scale is a five-tone scale, and the *pelog* system uses seven tones within an octave with unequal intervals. The emphasis on doubles is the same in life and religion, Raka explains. Everything exists in pairs: male/female, good/evil, hot/cold, night/day. This is also reflected in gamelan.

In the Nordic countries, an interest in dualisms has been growing within music education research communities (Angelo & Varkøy 2011, Folkestad 2006, Holgersen 2006, Varkøy 2008). One example is Göran Folkestad (2006), who contrasts formal ways of learning and teaching with informal ways of learning and teaching, whilst Varkøy (2008) deconstructs the separation between visually- and aurally-based music educations.

Reflecting on French philosopher Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction, dualisms are fundamental in thinking and speaking, because language is constructed around binary oppositions (Derrida 1979). Following Derrida's thoughts, oppositional

terms and thoughts can be deconstructed, and then reveal nuances that were not possible to see while the thoughts were bound to the oppositionalities (ibid.). From a Balinese perspective, such deconstruction might not be considered worth pursuing. In Raka's work, there are many nuances, and variations on the same binary patterns continue to unfold as the student's appreciation of the music develops over time. For example, the two scales are not just two, but many more, building upon these two. In Nordic music education, dualism has not so far been discussed as a pillar *in* music or music education. This study of Raka's teaching encourages discussions in that direction. The following discussion departs from two pillars that many times can seem to function as a dualism in Western music education, namely music and education.

Impacts for the basic fundament in music education

Music education may be regarded to have two cornerstones; *music* and *education*. The question is if this division is legitimate, and if it provides possibilities to reflect upon founding principles and values that provide the basis for music education *practices* such as this gamelan pedagogue's practice. When music-subjects (instrument, genres, choir, theory) and pedagogy/education-subjects are both separated and sub-divided into diverse components, pivots that fall between these categories might be hard to grasp, even though they may be the very basis on which such practices are built.

And, if music (in this conventional, very technical approach) is regarded as the subject that teachers are supposed to educate *in*, and pedagogy/education-subjects are considered as methods and philosophy *for* teaching and educating, how are teachers and students supposed to address the things that might really matter, in practices such as this gamelan pedagogue's?

In the gamelan pedagogue's work discussed in this article, the identified pivots (the collective, repetition and dualism) are intertwined aspects of life, society and religion, as well as gamelan music and gamelan education. None of these identified themes seems to fit into the conventional categories of "music-subject" or "education-subject". Instead, these themes extend to concerns about being a good person and striving for good values and good lives, and have aspects that go far beyond music/education categorization. For Raka, as for Australian music pedagogue Peter Dunbar-Hall, music *performance* is not appropriate to separate from music *education* (Dunbar-Hall 2009). Both are about music as a way of living, and a way of being, in the specific cultural surroundings.

Could gamelan be properly taught within other contexts, for example, in societies that rely on completely different collective values than those of the Balinese Hindu context? Probably, but then, the education would be about the *sound* of gamelan, not about the *sense* of gamelan – which pervades the lived experiences of the persons who take part in the education. As Raka sees it, this is part of the very duty of gamelan.

Nordic music education researchers claim music pedagogy to be a *meeting point* for several music educator identities, and several notions of music and musicking (Angelo 2012, Dyndahl & Ellefsen 2009, Johansen 2006). At this meeting point, it might be valuable to start exploring and understanding diverse (and apparently conflicting) understandings of music and music education. Narrative approaches offer an angle from which to explore such diversity, because stories told by music teachers and students, verbally or in teaching actions, can provide insight into how music education is experienced by each. This is an approach to music education that avoids the music/education divide, and starts instead with music and music education as lived experiences. I believe this is an angle that is not only fruitful and respectful, but also necessary, for bringing out potentials in music pedagogy as a meeting point for several notions of music and musicking.

The division music + education relies on a fundament that *music* is a thing, which *education* provides skills to teach about. It is not, necessarily. Music education need not be merely about skills, particular music pieces or historical periods. As the story of Raka's practice shows, music education can be about ways of living, and ways of being. Starting music teachers' education from this fundament could allow us not only to teach *about* music/ musicking as an activity that brings forth inwardly desired relations, but instead to actually bring these relations *into existence*, as an intrinsic part of music teaching and learning processes.

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Notes

- 1 Curricula from the Ministry of Education, 2006 (LK06), and the Norwegian Council for The Community School for Music and Arts, 2003 (RP03).
- 2 Important big ceremonies are: *Dewa Yadnya* (divine ceremonies), *Resi Yadnya* (prayer ceremonies), *Manusa Yadnya* (human ceremonies), *Pitra Yadnya* (soul ceremonies) and *Buta Yadnya* (demon ceremonies).
- 3 I elaborate on pivots and thematic narrative analysis in my doctoral work, i.e in Angelo 2012.
- 4 The concept Tri Hita Karana comes from Sanskrit language and refers to the need to maintain harmony and balance between humans and God, humans and other humans, and humans and the environment (see for example, Couteau, 2011, or <http://www.balistariland.com/Bali-Information/Balinese-Concept.htm>).
- 5 The Norwegian student in this narrative is my husband, Espen Aalberg. He is a professional classical and jazz musician, and had a scholarship this half-year to study gamelan in Bali. I am deeply grateful for our many discussions on this topic, and for his insightful help with this article.

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