

## Indonesian Cultural Diplomacy and “The First International Gamelan Festival and Symposium” at Expo 86

Jonathan Goldman and Jeremy Strachan

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In 1986, the city of Vancouver celebrated its centenary by hosting what would be the last World Exposition to take place in North America. From May to October, Expo 86 occupied a 70-hectare site along False Creek in the city’s downtown core, attracting some 22 million visitors who flocked to a lavish event that ran a deficit of nearly 250 million Canadian dollars.<sup>1</sup> Its theme of “World in Motion—World in Touch” was conceived, like many World Expos, to celebrate human achievement in innovation, technology, and communication. Particular to Vancouver’s Expo was its focus on transportation, and more so, its grandiose marketing strategy to sell the city as a critical node on the cultural and commercial axis of the Pacific Rim. While Expo was, as Eleanor Wachtel mordantly observed, a summarily regional affair aimed at bolstering Vancouver’s declining economy—created, she wrote shortly after the conclusion of the fair, “with no real program at all, conceived by persons with essentially no interest in world’s fairs”<sup>2</sup>—it offered a space for the kind of international cultural exchange in one particular regard overlooked by Expo’s many critics: at the Indonesia Pavilion, the First International Gamelan Festival and Symposium featured three and a half days of performances by Indonesian and Western gamelans, and lectures from international speakers. Held from August 18 to 21, 1986 at various locations on the Expo site (The Xerox Theatre, the ASEAN Plaza, the Plaza of Nations, as well as in the Indonesia Pavilion of Expo itself), it was conceived as a space where tradition,

modernity, East and West would intersect in a fruitful exchange of ideas. In this paper we suggest that far more occurred.<sup>3</sup>

The Symposium's impact was uniquely decisive for gamelan in Canada. Adhering to the custom of gifting gamelans to host countries that showcased them during performances and events, the Indonesian delegation donated a Javanese gamelan to Simon Fraser University in Vancouver,<sup>4</sup> and two Balinese gamelans to the Université de Montréal, ushering in a new era of study and performance at those institutions. Like many others around the world where similar donations were made, both Vancouver and Montréal now have thriving histories of gamelan performance dating back more than thirty years. But Expo 86 was held during the height of Indonesian president Suharto's 'New Order' regime of integrationism, pro-capitalist expansion and industrialization that began when he took power in 1967. We argue here that the Symposium, planned to coincide with Indonesian Independence Day, afforded the Republic an opportunity to leverage gamelan's potential as an instrument of cultural diplomacy, and became a means for exporting and presenting Indonesian sovereignty on a global stage. These diplomatic overtures came at a critical moment in the Indonesian regime, a regime whose New Order was marked by brutal authoritarianism as well as massive social and economic reforms.<sup>5</sup> By another turn, the Symposium was the first opportunity for contemporary musicians to affirm the vibrant international community of gamelan composition and performance; it instantiated the decades' worth of what Michael Tenzer describes as "on-the-ground, people-connecting" work being undertaken by practitioners across the globe.<sup>6</sup>

We begin this article by contextualizing the Symposium at Expo within the history of Indonesia's participation in World's Fairs and Expositions, where encounters with the exotic were once bound up in complicated renderings of self and other for both Western and Indonesian actors navigating colonialism's receding hold on the global stage. We then move forward with an account and analysis of concerts and lectures at the Symposium, which for the first time offered an

international range of perspectives and contemporary practices of gamelan performance and theory. Here, participants debated the fluid meanings of tradition and the modern in gamelan, a blurry and often illusory dichotomy that was borne out in performances of new compositions. Finally, we conclude by assessing the Symposium's lasting impacts not only on Canada and the U.S., but also Indonesian gamelan performance in its global contexts.

*Expo 86 in Context—Western Encounters with Indonesian Gamelan*

As visitors wandered into the Canada Pavilion at Expo 86—an extravagant building on the harbour adorned by five massive sails that would later become the city's convention centre—they came upon a succession of 'pop-up' performances while queuing for the main attractions and exhibitions therein. In several, the dramatis personae were a beaver and a goose, the two characters meant to represent the dichotomy of the nation's spirit. The series of skits were parables on life in modern Canada (and Canada as a place within the modern world). Industrious, determined, and unseeking of attention on the one hand, and loud, brash, and fearless on the other, the two archetypal figures worked through a range of subjects pressing upon the daily lives of Canadians in the 1980s: technology, the environment, geography, city life, and so on. In one, written by Gord Holtam and Rick Olsen (writers who went on to long careers in Canadian television and radio) called "Separate but Together," Goose is haplessly trying to practice musical scales, interrupting Beaver's attempt to read the newspaper in silence. Eventually the two reach a compromise and break out in song:

GOOSE:       They say east is east.  
 BEAVER:       They say west is west.  
 GOOSE:       Who knows which is worse.  
 BEAVER:       Who knows which is best.  
 GOOSE:       One coast is so close.

BEAVER: One coast is so far.  
 BOTH: We can bridge that gap.  
 Even reach a star.  
 But distance will show  
 The difference that's us,  
 Individuals  
 But we're all the same.<sup>7</sup>

The political climate in Canada in 1986 was ideal for such an event as the Symposium showcasing the possible benefits of intercultural collaboration. Multiculturalism had long been a policy prerogative of federal administrations, evolving in the early 1970s as an extension of Canada's historically complex negotiation of French and English dualisms within the fabric of national identity. In 1982, when Canada's constitution was patriated from Britain in a legislative and symbolic assertion of sovereignty, the notion of a shared multicultural heritage was acknowledged in its Charter of Rights and Freedoms, even if it remained outside the purview of enforceable legislation at the time. Within the roiling calculus of identity politics in Canada during the twentieth century, multiculturalism as official policy would mark a signal shift towards tolerance, acceptance, and recognition of the vast diversity of social life in the country—even if it has been critiqued as a means of perpetuating marginalization and inequity under the guise of progressive liberal pluralism.<sup>8</sup>

While Goose and Beaver's maudlin duet was a light-hearted take on the endless and unsolvable conundrum of national identity, beset, as it were, by the vast spaces, both physical and cultural, separating communities from each other, it more understatedly (in true Canadian fashion) brings into relief larger concerns that were familiar to World Expos. The West's encounters with its perennial Other, the East, had long been a main feature of the fairs, and in particular, so had innovative modes of presenting the exotic to spectators. Since the first London International Exposition in 1851,

World's Fairs and Expos had been concerned chiefly with the “specific aim of promoting the principle of display.”<sup>9</sup> With conceptual origins in post-revolutionary France, Expositions throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were designed to systematize presentations of “manufactured objects so as to render them meaningful beyond themselves”<sup>10</sup>—a concern tied to imperial and colonial displays of power, domination, and technological progress. It is well known that gamelan’s introduction to Western audiences came at the height of European colonialism, at the 1889 Exposition Universelle. How to present music at the fair, as Annegret Fauser notes, was a central concern for the festival’s organizers from early on. Music in late nineteenth-century France, she observes, echoed urban and industrial development with the increase of instrument manufacturers, concerts, private schools, and the like. But the display of ‘other’ musics at the fair proved jarring and uncomfortable to French listeners, who had by and large experienced the sounds of the Far East filtered only through Orientalist Western compositions, where the exotic remained safely contained within the cages of tonal harmony and familiar instrumentation.<sup>11</sup>

At the 1889 Exposition, Fauser notes that musics ‘shown’ there were part of a dual hierarchy, “one, absolute, between Western music and the rest; the other, relative, within this remainder of musics.”<sup>12</sup> For the Symposium at Expo 86, this ‘remaindered’ music was itself promoted as a means by which the parallel modernities of the East and West could come into proximity, where the envoys of New Order Indonesia could promote its national brand to a Western public eager for diverse and exciting cosmopolitan exchanges of culture. In the proposal to Expo’s commissioners, Montréal-based composer José Evangelista wrote that gamelan-influenced compositions were at the forefront of creative trends in the West. However, composers by and large were unaware of Indonesia’s contemporaneous musical vanguard, and as we will see, the notion of tradition itself as static, in the context of Indonesian arts, is highly problematic. The Symposium, Evangelista wrote, would be the first instance where gamelan—as Indonesia’s chief cultural export, and index of the Republic’s

increasing modernization—would be taken up as a cultural place of meeting. This conceptual site was envisioned as the nexus where the two axes of “tradition/modernity” and “East/West” would intersect, taking shape in papers, workshops, demonstrations, and concerts.<sup>13</sup> At Expo, Indonesian musicians wouldn’t simply be on display; rather, exponents of the republic’s musical vanguard would be presenting the newest developments in gamelan composition to demonstrate how traditional forms were open to experimentation.

Of course, long before the Expo, it was a Canadian who had played a decisive role in disseminating gamelan to Western audiences. Montreal-born and Toronto-raised composer Colin McPhee (1900–1964) had lived in Bali throughout the 1930s, composed works in the Balinese style (most notably *Tabuh Tabuhan* [1936]), and penned *A House in Bali*, his widely read memoir detailing those years. McPhee’s posthumously-published analytical study *Music in Bali* (1966) remained for a long time the only available English-language volume on the subject.<sup>14</sup> But besides his sojourn in Bali, McPhee had lived his adult life in the United States. Gamelan had been performed in Canada as early as 1957, when impresario Paul Szilard brought a troupe of 45 Balinese artists, led by I Ketut Mario and I Gusti Ngurah Rakah from the village of Tabanan to perform in Montreal’s St. Denis Theatre.<sup>15</sup> Influential field recordings of Balinese music such as *Music from the Morning of the World*, recorded by David Lewiston, and released on the Nonesuch Explorer Series (H-2015, 1967), made their rounds among composers, performers and informed record collectors alike. In the late 1960s, Toronto-based percussionists John Wyre and Robin Engelman (members of the noted percussion ensemble Nexus) travelled to Bali and the Philippines, and brought back, among other instruments, Balinese gongs, that would go on to be used in many of Nexus’s improvisations, performances and compositions, most notably Toru Takemitsu’s *From me flows what you call time* (1990) that was commissioned by the ensemble. In 1972, influential Quebec modernist composer Serge Garant (1929–1986) visited Bali, but returned “with a kind of certainty that this music couldn’t be taken off the island, that it belonged

to Bali and that almost none of its elements could be of use to us.”<sup>16</sup> Garant’s contemporary, composer and Montreal Conservatory professor Gilles Tremblay (1932–2017), also travelled to South-East Asia in 1972, and four years later, in the summer of 1976, Montreal-based composers José Evangelista (b. 1943) and John Rea (b. 1944) travelled to Indonesia, staying in Bali for several weeks. Noted Quebec composer Claude Vivier (1948–1983) stayed in Bali from December 1976 to February 1977,<sup>17</sup> writing to a friend that “I became a little Balinese”<sup>18</sup>; he would go on to compose *Pulau dewata* shortly thereafter, the first work by a Quebec composer inspired by Balinese gamelan.<sup>19</sup> Two years later, Vivier followed it up with another Balinese-inspired work, *Cinq chansons pour percussion* (1980), which uses a variety of instruments of Asian origin that were owned by the work’s dedicatee, percussionist David Kent, including Baines *trompong*. In 1983 the Evergreen Club Gamelan (now Evergreen Club Contemporary Gamelan) was founded by Jon Siddall and Andrew Timar in Toronto. Siddall acquired a set of Degung instruments from the Sundanese tradition of Java. The group, still active today, has specialized mostly in contemporary music, and has commissioned more than 200 works by composers including John Cage, James Tenney, Lou Harrison, and more recently Linda C. Smith and Ana Sokolovic.<sup>20</sup>

By the mid-1980s, then, the sounds of gamelan orchestras were not as strange to Western ears as they had been in 1889. In a 1983 issue of *Ear Magazine* dedicated to exploring “Indonesian Arts in America,” composer Barbara Benary published a survey of gamelans currently in use in the United States, as Jay Arms notes, listing more than one hundred that were housed in institutions (both academic and otherwise), as well as those being used by independent ensembles.<sup>21</sup> Arms’ 2018 dissertation examines in detail the history of gamelan’s diffusion into American experimental music—which he calls the ‘North American gamelan subculture’—which itself developed out of the larger, more multifaceted field of what has since become known as ‘American gamelan.’ As Arms explains, even by the time Expo 86 convened this first signal event of international practitioners, the valences

and politics of gamelan performance in America were complex, competing, and difficult to accurately define.<sup>22</sup> In their study of Lou Harrison's founding contributions to American gamelan—published in this journal in 1999—Leta Miller and Frederic Lieberman account for this history, one riven along lines of tradition and innovation: on the one hand, they observe, a predilection for learning older, 'traditional' repertoires was an extension of early ethnomusicological interest and advocacy by the likes of Jaap Kunst and Mantle Hood; on the other, composers saw new resources (in timbre, tuning, form, structure, and ensemble interactivity) to be exploited for new compositional ideas.<sup>23</sup>

Additionally, it is worth contextualizing the scope of the Symposium at Expo within the long history of gamelan's central role in cultural diplomacy. Indonesian 'cultural missions,' as they are frequently called, predate its independence from the Dutch in 1945. The origins of these cultural tours, writes Brita Renée Heimark, date as far back as 1931, when the Dutch sent Balinese musicians and dancers to the Paris Colonial Exhibition.<sup>24</sup> Some thirty years before Expo 86, on Indonesia's first official 'cultural mission' as a newly independent nation, a group of 60 dancers and musicians toured the People's Republic of China in 1954,<sup>25</sup> acting as formal diplomats representing the new republic. Eager to promote itself, Indonesia was one of the first countries to respond to the invitation for international participation at the 1964–1965 New York World's Fair, where, at the Indonesia Pavilion, a teenaged Sardono Kusumo—the artistic director and concert coordinator of the festival at Expo 86—gave a solo performance. As Sharyn Elise Jackson writes, "For [then president] Sukarno, the Indonesia Pavilion's purpose was to function as an expression of post-colonial independence of nation, ideology and spirit."<sup>26</sup>

Despite declaring that the Indonesian government was "morally committed" to making the Symposium an annual occurrence, this never happened,<sup>27</sup> but other international events took place in the years following that proposed cross-cultural encounters on similar terms. The 1991 Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington D.C. showcased the cultural life of the archipelago in its theme of



“Forest, Field, and Sea: the Folklife of Indonesia,” offering performances of dance, drama, and even gamelan instrument building workshops. In the same year, Rutgers University (where gamelan composer Phillip Corner and composer and Gamelan Son of Lion member Daniel Goode were both on faculty) hosted a Festival of Indonesia, featuring music by nine visiting Indonesian composers, many of whom had participated in Expo in Vancouver five years earlier, including Wayan Sadra and Made Sukerta.<sup>28</sup> International gamelan festivals have taken place as recently as 2017 in London and 2018 in Solo, Java, both under the aegis of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. While the Symposium at Expo 86 is certainly unique in the Canadian context, it played out as a significant cultural partnership between North American and Indonesian actors. The scope of Indonesian diplomatic and cultural missions was truly global—for example, following the Seville Expo ‘92, a gamelan was donated to the University of Barcelona.<sup>29</sup>

It’s worth further contextualizing the Symposium within the longer historical encounters between East and West facilitated by gamelan. In *Beyond Exoticism*, Timothy D. Taylor argues that the main project of European modernity in the nineteenth century was bound up in the West’s conceptions of selfhood—these conceptions, as he suggests, were abetted by European colonialism, whose projects helped define not only the concept of selfhood, but predictably, the notion of ‘other,’ both at home and abroad. Taylor’s exploration of this broad topic centres on the rise of tonality, and in particular opera, whose ascendance as the dominant European art followed the West’s imperial dominance on the global stage. The creation of difference, of how it was wrought in sound, image, and the imagination, was itself part of the West’s modern project of selfhood. As Taylor writes,

modern colonial attitudes toward racialized difference were shaped by existing attitudes toward difference; that new, racialized conceptions of difference drew upon older notions of gendered difference [as in a feminized Other], and upon the racialized difference of Others closer to home—Turks, Arabs, Jews, Irish; and that these eventually informed one another.<sup>30</sup>

Taylor notes that there needs to be a recognition of the paradigm shift in international flows of culture that separate the nineteenth and twentieth (and perhaps twenty-first) centuries. He writes—not entirely accurately, it seems to us—that under globalization and capitalism, the forces of colonialism and imperialism are “largely though not wholly defunct.”<sup>31</sup> Identity, culture, and even difference within a globalized world are produced now through patterns and habits of consumption; modernity itself is less a project of imagining selfhood than it is, per Taylor, having it manufactured for us. What is relevant to our subject here is the historic ‘flow’ (to borrow a term favoured in discussions about globalization in the 1990s) of Indonesian gamelan across hemispheres from the period of the 1890s to the 1980s—or what Taylor is considering, for his purposes, as respective periods of colonialism/imperialism and globalism/capitalism: when Suharto’s musicians were dispatched as cultural envoys to Canada, and by extension the West, in 1986, it was under an *explicit* pretext of diplomacy. The political expediency of the Symposium was unquestionably Suharto’s main priority—not the intermingling of cultures East and West, nor the imaging or manufacturing of any self or Other.

*Hearing Tradition and Modernity at Expo*

The First International Gamelan Festival and Symposium was designed to present gamelan to public audiences in concerts and workshops, but also to facilitate knowledge exchange amongst experts through the paper presentations, discussion, and debate. Among the members of its Organising and Steering Committees, two personalities stand out: I Made Bandem and Sardono Kusumo. The Balinese dancer and ethnomusicologist I Made Bandem (b. 1945) had already risen to prominence in the institutionalized arts community in Indonesia. By 1981, he was named Director of Indonesia’s prestigious academy of dance, the ASTI (now ISI) school in Denpasar. It was in this capacity that he was called upon to play a major role in the organization of the Symposium as Chairman

of the Steering Committee. Sardono Kusumo (b. 1945) directed the so-called ‘EXPO group,’ an *ad hoc* ensemble of Indonesian musicians and dancers who were the main performers at concerts. Additionally, as the concert coordinator, his artistic guidance played a decisive role in the Indonesian-presented works. As an experimental dancer and choreographer, Sardono had gained a reputation in Indonesia and beyond for his artistic reimagining of the famous ‘kecak’ dance.<sup>32</sup> Before the Symposium, he had already participated in high-profile international events such as Festival of Nancy in France in 1973, and at the Shiraz festival in Iran in 1974 alongside modernist luminaries Iannis Xenakis and Karlheinz Stockhausen.

Andy McGraw has commented on the extensively intertwined nature of Indonesian culture, diplomacy, and foreign assistance during the years of bloody conflict surrounding the overthrow of Sukarno in 1965. He writes of the “violent entrance” of Suharto’s New Order, the U.S.-aligned regime that emerged with the fall of Sukarno and the communist party in Indonesia. While it is beyond the scope of the present article to outline the nuanced intra-political alliances that crumbled during the coup, what remains salient is that during the 1970s, major American philanthropic efforts to promote Indonesian culture (such as the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations) were intrinsic to the development of *musik kontemporer*, also referred to as *komposisi karawitan baru* (new gamelan composition) or simply *kreasi baru* (new creation)<sup>33</sup>—the experimental school of thinking in gamelan composition that emerged in the mid-1970s, and that was characterized by Franki Raden as music that “emerged as a consequence of the encounter between Western and Indonesian traditional culture.”<sup>34</sup> McGraw writes,

With the cultural war won and many communist performing artists in Bali and Java slaughtered, [the Ford Foundation] invested heavily in cultural revitalization through its Traditional Arts Project, a \$100,000 program conducted between 1973 and 1980—just as

musik kontemporer began to emerge—in which traditional performing arts in several villages were revitalized and documented.<sup>35</sup>

This promotion of Indonesian culture via massive state sponsorship was an important part of the New Order's institutionalization of national identity. Not only was this mobilized through the performing arts, but through designating Indonesian as the national language (*bahasa Indonesia*, the mother tongue of only a small minority of the population in comparison to hundreds of regional dialects), through a strengthening of the civil service, public education, state media, and other infrastructural consolidation that similarly functioned to eradicate dissent during the 1970s and 1980s. Sardono's work during this time was radical, rooted both in experimental approaches to dance as it was in traditional forms. For Expo, Sardono conceived of the entire Symposium as a single, cross-cultural work of art, and noted in conversation with Jody Diamond in 1987, that “when the Phinisi boat arrived here in Vancouver after sailing from Indonesia, I made a welcoming ceremony that combined all the artists of different Indonesian cultures in the EXPO group and dancers from the local [First Nations] culture as well.”<sup>36</sup> One of Sardono's goals with the festival was also to introduce Western audiences to contemporary and sometimes experimental gamelan composed by Indonesian composers, as well as showcase gamelan performed by non-Indonesian gamelans, most of which were invited on the suggestion of Jody Diamond, who had met Sardono during travels in Java in the years prior to the Expo. One of his stated goals, as expressed to Diamond, was to dispel what he saw as a prevailing myth in the West about gamelan, according to which it was ‘traditional’ music rather than modern and often experimental, with new pieces created by contemporary composers.<sup>37</sup>

### *The Concerts*

Concerts during the Symposium were held in alternation with moderated panels over the course of the three and a half days; all were open to the public, but the general consensus among those

who were interviewed for this article was that the value of the Symposium lay in the opportunity for performers and composers to intermingle; both Michael Tenzer and Ed Herbst recounted an informal atmosphere of conviviality. In addition to the EXPO group from Indonesia, a number of prominent gamelans, specializing in either traditional repertoire or experimental composition, from North America traveled to Vancouver to perform, including: Gamelan Si Betty (Lou Harrison's group based at San Jose State University); Sekar Jaya (founded at Berkeley by Michael Tenzer, Wayan Suweca and Rachel Cooper); Gamelan Son of Lion (co-founded by composer and ethnomusicologist Barbara Benary (1946–2019), Philip Corner and Daniel Goode based in New York City); Kiyai Guntu Sari (from Portland); Bay-Area New Gamelan (led by Jody Diamond, editor of *Balungan*, the American journal of gamelan). As well, two international gamelans participated: The German Banjar Gruppe Berlin and Gamelan Darma Budaya (from Kyoto, Japan).

Even the EXPO group itself displayed geographical breadth, as it was subdivided into three gamelans, according to their very different regional musical traditions: there was the Bali Group; the Java/Sunda Group; and, a third called the Sabrang Group, that combined together several different musical traditions indigenous to a number of smaller Indonesian islands. *Sabrang* means to 'cross over' and was used in this context to refer to the so-called 'outer islands' of Indonesia—Sumatra, Sulawesi and the Celebes, and to the people who quite literally 'crossed over' to Jakarta to study or work.<sup>38</sup> This structure already reveals that the idea of 'cross-over' was built into the performance design proposed by the Indonesian delegation, and not, as is so often assumed, a category reserved for the Western side of cultural exchange.

The EXPO group performed several times, beginning with a 30-minute evening concert on the first day of the festival, Aug 18, 1986, at the Xerox International Theatre on the Expo site. They played one piece, *Sworo Pencon* by S. Bono, which demonstrated the group's "basic training in Javanese and Balinese gamelan."<sup>39</sup> The following night, they performed three pieces, beginning with *Liar Samas*

by Wayan Lotring, *Purwa Pascima* by Wayan Beratha as well as the *Telek-Jauk* dance. This repertoire neatly encapsulated the artistic goals of the festival, as articulated by Bandem and Kusumo, representing ‘traditional,’ ‘classic’ and ‘modern’ repertoire (Bandem proposed to view the event along an axis that he terms “culture and style—traditional vs. modern”<sup>40</sup>): the *Telek-Jauk* dance represents ‘traditional,’ non-authorial repertoire; the piece by Lotring represents ‘classic’ composition from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, since Lotring (1887/98–1982/83)<sup>41</sup> is credited with being the first Balinese composer to claim authorial status and sign his name as the creator of musical compositions, and a symbol of a first modernist thrust in gamelan. The work *Liar Samas*, often performed today by contemporary gong kebyar gamelans, was composed in 1940 for, as the program notes claim, “the famous gamelan group from the village of Saba in the Gianyar district”<sup>42</sup>; finally, as a prominent contemporary composer, Beratha (1926–2014) represented the cutting-edge music of the contemporary moment of the Expo. Beratha’s work for the kebyar ensemble *Purwo Pascima* (meaning ‘East-West’) displays what the program describes as “the influence of Western music ... in the use of 3/4 time near the end of the piece.”<sup>43</sup> Many of the musicians of the U.S. and European gamelans were astounded by the musicianship and daring nature of Beratha’s works as well as other contemporary Indonesian compositions performed by the EXPO group.<sup>44</sup>

The final performance by the EXPO group was at the closing concert on the evening of 20 August. The event was followed by a *Wayang Kulit*, or Javanese shadow puppet performance, that was performed through the night until 5:00 am by *dalang* (puppet master) Blacius Subono—which is why the festival extended into August 21. If the August 18 performance evoked temporal sweep—the distant past (tradition), recent past (Lotring) and the present (Beratha’s experimental contemporary music of ‘*musik kontemporer*’)—the closing concert emphasized geographical breadth, having the EXPO group alternate with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra (VSO), conducted by Peter McCoppin. The presence of the VSO emphasized the theme of cultural exchange central to the

Festival and Symposium’s messaging, rather bluntly symbolizing the highest echelons of Western artistry, craft, and discipline. The VSO programmed Western works inspired by gamelan, including McPhee’s *Tabuh Tabuhan*, Debussy’s *Nocturnes* and José Evangelista’s memorial to recently deceased Quebecois composer Claude Vivier, *Clos de vie* (although this last work was cancelled at the last minute). As for the EXPO group, it performed two relatively recently composed works: *Asana Wali* by Made Sukerta and *La La* by Martopangrawit. The latter was an important Javanese theorist and contemporary composer who died just a few months before the Vancouver event. The former, Sukerta, was a musician who would go on to explicitly theorize *komposisi baru* or ‘new composition’ in what Jody Diamond described as “the first ever guide to contemporary and experimental composition for gamelan.”<sup>45</sup> His work for gong kebyar, *Asana wali*, was composed in 1978 for the Bali Arts Festival.<sup>46</sup> The program notes indicate that “the composer, although born in Bali, has a strong cultural background from Surakarta, Central Java, where he finished his education and is presently working. This has colored his arrangement of the vocal and kendang (drum) parts in this piece, and shows his attempt to go beyond the boundaries of the kebyar tradition.”<sup>47</sup>

What was striking to many contemporary observers of the festival was the abundance of new and even experimental compositions for gamelan in the concerts that formed a part of the festival. This goes as much for the North-American gamelans—who, since they were often performing on non-traditional instruments with tuning systems frequently at variance with traditional Indonesian genres—tended to forge their own idiosyncratic repertoire, but also for the EXPO group, who performed many recent compositions by prominent Balinese and Javanese composers, like Sukerta and Martopangrawit. Playing these experimental creations symbolically made a strong statement about Indonesia’s support for innovation, individualism and creativity.

*Aesthetic and Political Underpinnings of Contemporary Balinese and Javanese Gamelan Compositions*

The abundance of new compositions from Indonesia, however, likely didn't preclude some Expo visitors from assuming that the music performed by the Indonesians would be 'traditional'—'pre-modern,' as it were—while some North American ensembles, led in several cases by prominent avant-garde composers, presented 'contemporary music,' or, according to a category proposed by I Made Bandem, they performed "using new instruments modelled after gamelan for playing contemporary compositions based on Western compositional practice."<sup>48</sup> However, as we have seen, it was emphatically not the case that the Indonesian compositions were exemplars of 'tradition.' Still, while many Indonesian participants looked on approvingly at the experimentations of North American gamelans<sup>49</sup> (many making use of compositional concepts with no equivalents in traditional gamelan, or used instruments inspired by gamelan but made from different materials, such as Barbara Benary's use of modified pelog and slendro scales to approximate diatonicism,<sup>50</sup> or Lou Harrison and William Colvig's largely aluminum 'Si Betty' gamelan<sup>51</sup>), other North American creations influenced by Cagean experimentalism were greeted by some of the Indonesian delegation with discrete snickers.<sup>52</sup> This emphasis on new music and experimentation aligned post-independence prerogatives that sought to project the image of a forward looking, innovative and creative Indonesia, one reflected in the constantly evolving arts scene, rather than the reified image of an atemporal non-modern tradition that was the preferred form of cultural representation in the colonial Expos and World's Fairs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. McGraw notes that although "the traditional and the modern are often represented as an antagonistic battle between the past and the future, in Indonesia [during the New Order] they emerged together as a consequence of the evolutionist assumptions of development."<sup>53</sup>

Judith Becker, writing in her influential 1980 book *Traditional Music in Modern Java* identifies the tensions surrounding gamelan as they played out in cultural politics in post-Independence Java.



Gamelan, in the early years of Sukarno's Indonesia, represented for gamelan's opponents (*santri*) "an obstacle to democracy and a hindrance in the path of a nation trying to modernize," while its devotees felt reticent to abandon its traditions for the sake of progress.<sup>54</sup> Composers for gamelan were thus faced with the dilemma of satisfying both camps, of creating gamelan music that simultaneously looked forward and backwards. But as Becker observes, "Within a purely oral tradition, all music is contemporary,"<sup>55</sup> when the transmission of repertoires and practices occurs independent of their fixity within notation, the temporal distinction between historicity and contemporaneity becomes dissolute. To again quote McGraw, "*Tradisi* belongs to a contingent temporal frame ranging from a depth of thousands of years to merely decades, and thus represents a qualitative measure of experiential time rather than a quantitative, homogenous time."<sup>56</sup> Likening the concept to a giant monument erected in 1986 in the administrative district of Denpasar, McGraw writes that "Tradisi was its representational space, similarly centralized and managed."<sup>57</sup>

As one example that illustrates this false dichotomy, Becker cites the case of Ki Wasitodipuro, the Javanese songwriter and composer who supplied Sukarno's slogans with music. She describes Wasitodipuro's composition *Jaya Manggala Gita* as "radiating" the "fervour and idealism of a newly independent state"<sup>58</sup>:

It also vividly illustrates the beginnings of a new approach toward gamelan composition, with the composer/performer no longer only a medium of transmission of traditional materials, but a self-conscious creator who organizes and focuses the musical materials of his tradition and expresses, if not uniquely himself, at least his interpretation of the events about him.<sup>59</sup>

Ki Wasitodipuro also composed the piece "Orde Baru" (the New Order) for Suharto, whose government "still needs the validation and legitimizing power that is to be derived from slogans." Becker is writing here in 1980, not so far in the past from 1986. The song doesn't use regional Javanese, but rather the national language.<sup>60</sup>

Indonesian national identity and nationalist ideology, however, figured preemptively into the Republic's independence. As Phillip Yampolsky writes in an article published during Suharto's final years in power, a sanctioned and mobilized national identity was conceptualized as a central tenet of Indonesia's future when the inevitability of independence became clear in 1945.<sup>61</sup> Becker's main argument is that the Javanese tradition of composing for one's patron/King had transferred to a post-Independence practice of composing for the government; this, according to her somewhat contemporaneous account of tradition and modernity in Javanese gamelan is what passes for social responsibility in music. Historian Claire Holt, writing in the tumultuous year of 1967 in her foundational *Art in Indonesia: Continuity and Change*, notes that "the State and its President have become the chief art patrons," along with the Indonesian upper class who had become primary consumers of art.<sup>62</sup> Contemporary Indonesian composition, then, had become intimately bound up in the political and social currents shaping the Republic—innovation *in* tradition was a state sanctioned endeavour, where the creative and the political were inseparable from each other.

#### *Intercultural Exchange, Modernity, and Diplomacy*

But can Holt's assertion that the performing arts are essential tools of statecraft and diplomacy in Indonesia, that the majority of "political music" in 1980s Indonesia functioned to prop up Suharto's New Order, be taken wholesale without being critical of its flattening effects on regional Indonesian cultural expression?<sup>63</sup> The many paradoxical aspects of contemporary Indonesian music—at once modern and ancient, regionally idiomatic and nationally symbolic, consummately non-Western in tuning and timbre yet ubiquitous in the West—were taken up by gamelan practitioners from around the globe in the Symposium's moderated panels.<sup>64</sup> They provided an important counterpoint to the concerts at the Symposium, one in which a wide variety of composers, performers and musicologists were invited to share their ideas on gamelan and on intercultural exchange. Here, for the first time,

international perspectives on contemporary gamelan practice and theory were presented to public audiences.

While the Symposium's overarching theme of intercultural exchange was designed to fold into Expo 86's grandiose program of a modern, mobile, and plugged-in global citizenship, some of the papers were purely documentary or even journalistic in nature—for example, Shin Nakagawa's report on gamelan activity in Japan (itself reflective of Japan's postwar cultural omnivorousness), and Alec Roth's account of similar activity in the United Kingdom. Others presented new creative approaches to gamelan composition: Barbara Benary delivered an overview of minimalist and process composition for gamelan by contemporary American composers; José Evangelista gave a talk on his own incorporation of *karawitan* (classic gamelan technique) and colotomic structure in the composition of his piece *Motionless Move*; others, as we will see, expressed a frank scepticism with the very notion of cross-cultural encounter at all. In what follows, we examine a selection of the perspectives presented at the Symposium.<sup>65</sup>

I Made Bandem—recognized then, as now, as a leading expert on the global history and development of Indonesian music—delivered a brief opening speech outlining his assessment of the current state of gamelan in the world. He discussed Western composers inspired by gamelan, including an “older generation” (Colin McPhee, Ernst Eichheim and Lou Harrison), and “younger composers who often have direct, hands-on performance knowledge of gamelan traditions.”<sup>66</sup> In this category, he identified Ton de Leeuw, Richard Feliciano, Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Douglas Young, José Evangelista, Ingram Marshall and Daniel Schmidt. Bandem then placed this Western gamelan-inspired production in three categories according to the materials employed: a first category “uses principles of musical form and orchestration borrowed from gamelan but performed on Western instruments.” A second group “writes for a combination of Western and gamelan instruments, often with an emphasis on experimentation with timbre.” A third group “composes music, at times very

close to traditional gamelan, in other cases quite far removed, for their own newly designed and built sets of tuned percussion instruments modelled on Indonesian gamelan.”<sup>67</sup> Bandem assigned the participating ensembles into six different categories: those 1) that use traditional gamelan instruments to play traditional repertoire or new repertoire inspired by tradition, such as Gamelan Sekar Jaya, the Boston Village Gamelan and the EXPO Group<sup>68</sup>; 2) groups that use traditional gamelan instruments to perform new compositions with only “some basic traditional gamelan concepts” including the Japanese group Dharma Budaya and Gamelan Son of Lion; 3) groups that use “new instruments modelled after gamelan for playing contemporary compositions largely based on traditional devices” (of which Lou Harrison’s Gamelan Si Betty is the canonical example). A fourth category includes gamelans using new instruments modelled on gamelan to perform “contemporary compositions based on Western contemporary practices,” including Gamelan Pacifica and the Bay Area New Gamelan. A fifth uses “any sounding instruments for playing avant-garde music,” (Banjar Gruppe Berlin). A sixth and final category is reserved for Western ensembles, the symphony orchestra being the example *par excellence*, who perform “compositions based on gamelan musical form and timbre,” as in the works of Debussy, McPhee or Evangelista. Bandem’s elaborate taxonomy conjures a complex landscape of Western music inspired by gamelan that spans generations, genres, instruments and styles, one too rich to be captured by a single characterization, too sturdy to be lost by changing aesthetic prerogatives or fashions.

Borrowing from Claire Holt’s idea of continuity and change, the American ethnomusicologist Ed Herbst delivered a philosophical paper on what the sensory implications of experiencing gamelan might mean (“When, Where and How is Gamelan?”). Rather than resort to problematic dichotomies of traditional and contemporary, which Herbst extended to troubling anthropocentric views of “civilized” versus “primitive,” or “immature” versus “mature” in ecological terms, Herbst suggested that “gamelan is a phenomenon where something happens, rather than a discrete, objectifiable

entity,”<sup>69</sup> that when considered through its gestural forms, “we can ask what is happening, where is it happening, and why is it happening?”<sup>70</sup> For Herbst, a vocalist and dancer trained in *gender wayang*, the intrinsic value of gamelan in the West isn’t something measured by cultural exchange, but rather what becomes sensual (or sensible) in the experience of performing and listening. Herbst was equally concerned with explicating the contextual holism of gamelan in his paper, the interrelated and experiential dimensions of composition, performing, aurality, and sensory engagement that prevent gamelan’s object-status as a thing—an instrument, a score, and so on. In some ways, Herbst’s comments prefigure a much later shift in ethnomusicology towards the phenomenology of sound—the kinds of intercorporeal and material exchange between the perceiving body and the instruments with which it interfaces.

In a rather sceptical take on things, the Canadian composer Martin Bartlett read a paper titled “Growing Orchids in Greenhouses,” which drew on personal observations from his time spent in Bali. In discussing the notion of music as sociopolitical critique, Bartlett made note that in the West, composers were drawn to the power of musical creativity as a means of challenging dominant governmental structures, policies, and agendas. Indonesian artistic innovation often tended, in Suharto’s New Order, to “support government policy through new compositions.”<sup>71</sup> The image of an orchid in a greenhouse—something delicate, cultivated perhaps unnaturally if not with a false expedience—evoked the fetishistic aspect of gamelan for the West. Our reasons for being attracted to it, wrote Bartlett, include the West’s perennial “craving for the new and unusual,” compared to the “much greater respect and concern for a slowly developing tradition” that Indonesian practices tend to favour.<sup>72</sup> At odds with what we’ve been emphasizing here is a fundamentally different conceptualization of innovation. Western composers, Bartlett argued, are dubious of progress in the art, and fetishize the archaic aspects of gamelan. Quite provocatively, one would imagine in hearing such remarks at the conference, he made the point that “Western musicians hear gamelan as ... an

example of whatever their current preoccupation is,” that “North Americans and Indonesians hear totally different things when they listen to the same music.”<sup>73</sup> Bartlett admitted his own attraction to gamelan for its radical departure from Western music—the “ensemble concept that gamelan represents, the way in which individuals work together, the way material is invented and varied, the giving up of the vulgar egoism of the composer, the ability to play with the ears than with the eyes.”<sup>74</sup> Michael Tenzer, in conversation with the authors, recalls challenging Bartlett’s “simplistic, romantic depictions of the decadent West versus the spiritual East” at the Symposium in the strongest terms possible.<sup>75</sup>

In tandem with Bartlett’s cautionary take on the increased internationalization of Indonesian gamelan by the mid-1980s, the German composer Dieter Mack warned against the illusion of intercultural exchange through what he called “technical appearances” in his essay “East-West Exchange but No World Music.”<sup>76</sup> In both his comments and the symposium as well as in conversation decades later, Mack expressed a wariness about replicating the colonial exoticism of past and present attempts at musical integration between East and West. As he told us in interview, the ‘east meets west’ paradigm was laden, for him, with problematic associations of *Weltmusik*, a popular if facile rendering of cross-cultural exchange: “In Germany *Weltmusik* at that time was identified with all these new age-like activities...Indian music meets jazz music; and Japan meets jazz etcetera, etcetera. And then in pop music, they [would] put together an Indian drummer, a guitar player from England; a sitar player from everywhere, whatever. And then they just find a common groove and then they improvise.”<sup>77</sup> Mack in his paper lists several examples of a “hybrid combination of different resources”<sup>78</sup>—including Stockhausen’s *Telemusik*, Eberhard Schoener’s Balinese inflected post-disco excursions; Debussy, and even Messiaen. In short, Mack articulated serious reservations about what he terms the “cult of materialistic externality” in resituating the technical markers of one musical tradition within the compositional strategies of another; as such, these technical appearances, for

Mack, run the risk of eliding the crucial organicism of gamelan for the sake of composerly innovation. There seems, then, to be an undercurrent of trepidation—either overt or not—within some of the Western voices at the Symposium about embracing gamelan as a cultural space of meeting without acknowledging some of the pitfalls of the territory. While many of the participants at Expo had met before, and were in some cases close friends, the political subtext of the conference was acutely understood by Bartlett, Herbst, Mack et al; further, the roles Indonesian musicians performed as not only cultural ambassadors but also surrogates of the New Order was not news to any.

*Lasting Impact, Indonesian Modernity, and Cultural Diplomacy*

It bears repeating that intercultural exchange in music, then, cannot be thought of without the subtle and not-so-subtle epistemological divergences in Indonesian and Western approaches to tradition and innovation. Indeed, with its long history of being put on display in World Expos as a way of showcasing the spoils of colonial conquest, Indonesian culture at Expo 86 was still very much a site where modernity was being trafficked in complex and not altogether apparent ways—including the roles played by the members of the EXPO group themselves. “Prior to independence,” writes Jennifer Lindsay,

arts of the Netherlands East Indies had been regularly presented beside the cultural trophies of other colonial powers at the large World Fairs, where static displays of arts and crafts together with live performances conveyed an image of timeless tradition and innocence juxtaposed to the technological development and forward-moving modernity of the West.<sup>79</sup>

Not only was the Indonesian-composed music at the First International Gamelan Festival and Symposium aimed at refuting colonial archetypes of primitiveness, the dancers and musicians in the EXPO group were carefully selected based on their ability to present Indonesian modernity on stage. EXPO group members, as Diamond reported, were chosen for a variety of reasons—aside from

‘overall talent’ and appropriate personal circumstances that would allow for a months-long absences from family, open-mindedness and artistic flexibility factored in. Yet beyond this, musicians were conscripted to be ambassadors of Suharto’s New Order: only so-called “clean musicians” participated, as Ed Herbst recalled, which in the political context of the time meant no one with overt left-leaning tendencies. “It definitely was part of a diplomatic aim, and also, it cannot be stripped of its extreme political nature—of including certain people and not including others. So, it was very much, in that part of the 80s—it was part of Suharto’s repressive military dictatorship,” he recalled. The Symposium was meant to function as an extension of Suharto’s regime, and “Indonesian musicians [were] operating at the cooperation and at the behest of this...dictatorship.” He continued: “It’s fascinating. All of them felt that they were trying to keep the humanistic values, the artistic values supported in some way. And reach out in the world and have their arts resonate with broader humankind.”<sup>80</sup>

A substantial aspect of Indonesian cultural diplomacy had been reliant upon capitalizing on the West’s long-standing fascination with the archipelago, and especially Bali, as a paradise out of time.<sup>81</sup> It is no surprise that the local press emphasized the exotic allure of Indonesian culture in reviews of the concerts at the Symposium. One described Sardono’s “monkey trance dance” (i.e. *kecak*) as “other-worldly,” “magical,” “sensuous,”—“an authentic, joyful experience.”<sup>82</sup> In another, a description of young Indonesian performers was borne out in troubling language, where “ancient legong keraton court dances [were performed by] prepubescent children — spasmed hands and arms aflicker, bodies writhing and jerking, arms akimbo, a marvel of poise and control in such infants.”<sup>83</sup> The Vancouver Expo, as Henry Spiller notes, “made it clear that Indonesians not only were aware of North American representations of gamelan music but had a stake in them as well.”<sup>84</sup> Indonesia’s minister of national planning and development, Dr. J. B. Sumarlin, in the closing remarks at the conclusion of the Symposium, publicly acknowledged the contribution of Mantle Hood in the establishment and proliferation of gamelans in U.S. universities, going so far as to informally bestow



Hood the honorific ‘Ki.’<sup>85</sup> It was clear to all present that without the implantation of gamelan on American university campuses, creating an ecology recently analyzed by Benjamin Brinner,<sup>86</sup> the kinds of exchange that was a prerequisite of the Festival and Symposium could not have occurred.

I Made Bandem observed that “Indonesia is a big country but we don’t have strong technology or industry yet, so the best way to communicate with other people around the world is through culture. [...] We hope that our [diplomatic] corps abroad can be supported by our coming there to perform for them.”<sup>87</sup> Indonesian music professor Suka Hardjana stated that the Expo was “the beginning of a new era in Indonesia’s communications with the wider world.”<sup>88</sup> While Indonesia had used culture as an instrument of international diplomacy since its founding as an independent republic under Sukarno, it was officially instituted as cultural policy in 1988.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, Meghan Hynson has shown how “developments in teaching Indonesian angklung [...] have made the instrument an effective tool in music education and Indonesian ‘soft power’ cultural diplomacy”<sup>90</sup> in the United States, and a similar analysis could be applied to other spheres of gamelan practice in North America.<sup>91</sup> Hynson notes that by tuning the bamboo Angklung to Western diatonic scales, “angklung does become more accessible, and as a hybrid of Indonesian and Western elements, it has the unique ability to connect people from all over the world.”<sup>92</sup> Similarly, the hybrids proposed by both Indonesian and non-Indonesian gamelans at Expo 86 facilitated the diplomatic goals of the Festival and Symposium’s organizers.

Besides the large-scale, state-to-state outcomes of this Indonesian pageant at a Canadian forum, it is worthwhile to note the small-scale, social, artistic and professional outcomes that the First International Gamelan Festival and Symposium had for musicians involved. The event helped to cement Sardono Kusumo’s reputation as an avant-garde as well as socially-conscious artist, able to seemingly without effort produce performance art rooted both in Western modernist experimentalism and in continuity with evolving Indonesian artistic practices. Moving out to a more macroscopic view, the festival has been credited as contributing to the development of a full-fledged experimental branch

of gamelan arts in Bali, the so-called *musik kontemporer*, although this claim needs to be nuanced by the experimental practices that had already been explored by some Indonesian composers.

The Symposium also gave self-confidence to non-Indonesian groups practicing gamelan in different ways, from the most normative Indonesian styles to the most idiosyncratic compositional forays. Those who were performing new compositions for American or European gamelan were in a sense bearing out ethnomusicologist Judith Becker's 1983 prediction that "a possible next step in the gradual assimilation of a foreign style into an indigenous one would be to play one's own music on the foreign instruments."<sup>93</sup> What is clear is that they were using "composition to explore, understand, and honor the gamelan music that most of them began to know as students and ethnomusicologists,"<sup>94</sup> and these compositions were by and large greeted with open-mindedness and respect by the musicians of the EXPO group.

The event also helped to form or extend musical friendships between Balinese and Javanese musicians on the one hand and North American and European ones practicing art forms that originated on these islands on the other. Some of these friendships continued for decades until the present day, as participants Michael Tenzer and Ed Herbst confirmed for us. Tenzer, then aged 29 and considered today to be a leading Western authority on Balinese gamelan,<sup>95</sup> attended the Expo as the co-founder of the Berkeley-based Gamelan Sekar Jaya, and stressed the excitement, goodwill and good feeling that characterized the interactions between the different participating musicians. In Tenzer's case, as for many of the Western gamelan musicians there, the festival gave them the opportunity to connect with friends made during previous stays in Indonesia. For Indonesian musicians, various lasting effects of the event, as well as other similar events that came before and after it were clear. I Made Bandem gained a reputation in international circles as perhaps the most renowned Balinese authority on gamelan, a position cemented by his authoring a widely-circulated Indonesian-language reference book on gamelan.<sup>96</sup>

Though Expo 67 remains Canada's most memorable contribution to international World's Fairs, Indonesia was not among the nations who showcased culture on the Expo site in Montréal that year, and no gamelan was heard by attendees. Expo 86 was by comparison less a national festival than it was a moment for Vancouver and Canada's pacific regional identity to take centre stage for a few brief months; yet for gamelan on the world stage, the Symposium at Expo 86 was an event without parallel. In Canada, as we've mentioned, the gifts of the gamelans to Canadian institutions (specifically the Javanese gamelan given to SFU through the efforts of Martin Bartlett, that went on to be used by the Vancouver Community Gamelan Kyai Madu Sari,<sup>97</sup> and the two Balinese sets (gamelan gong kebyar and a gamelan angklung) to the Université de Montréal, that spawned the founding of that university's gamelan atelier as well as the Montreal-area Balinese gamelan Giri Kedaton, through the initiative of José Evangelista) gave rise to gamelan courses and workshops at these institutions. These gifts, formally announced by Indonesian Ambassador Adiwoso Abubakar, were made as "a tribute to the good relations between his country and Canada."<sup>98</sup>

The Symposium's relationship to politics and diplomacy, however, extends beyond the halls of music schools. By the mid 1980s, Suharto was at the height of his power, facing virtually no opposition internally, and benefiting from the virtual erasure of political pluralism under the New Order. The West, eager to embrace Indonesia's rapid economic growth, looked away from the dictator's brutally repressive actions against Indonesian citizens. Indeed, Indonesia's presence at Expo highlighted Canada's affinity for the Republic's aggressive foreign diplomacy. At the same time, the New Order's effacing of the vibrant cultural heterogeneity of Indonesia was overlooked as the two nations forged expanding ties. The Symposium was vaunted by Indonesian dignitaries as a landmark summit articulating the goodwill between the two nations. In his closing address, J. B. Sumarlin, Minister for National Development Planning of the Republic of Indonesia, declared that:

Far to [sic] often the adoption of foreign values of one culture by another is one of consequences of war and subsequent subjugation, yet again we are rare. Our adoption of technologies, and your adoption of our music and dance, are not the consequence of war but rather the result of mutual admiration.<sup>99</sup>

Later that year, seven Canadian companies and the Department of External Affairs were part of a 1986 military air show hosted by Indonesia; one Canadian company signed a two-million dollar contract at the show,<sup>100</sup> and throughout the remainder of Suharto's dictatorship, characterized by crony capitalism and violent suppression of opposition, Canada pursued an increasingly pro-Indonesia policy agenda despite the ongoing human rights crimes committed within Indonesia, most egregiously against the East Timorese beginning the mid 1970s. Even the activities of the newly formed Atelier de Gamelan at the Faculté de musique, Université de Montréal, were tied into this current of diplomatic alignment with Suharto. In a letter addressed to John Wiebe, the Senior Vice President of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, to secure seed funding for a proposed new project by the Atelier, the Montreal Liaison Officer Mireille Lafleur highlighted the political expediency of demonstrating Canada's commitment to Indonesia:

It is of political interest that Canada supports governments who engage themselves in regional peace and stability in South-East Asia. The directing role of Indonesia within ASEAN and its moderating influence within the non-aligned countries, the OPEP and the Islamic conference make Indonesia one of the most important political country [sic] for Canada. ...We could feel by the presence of His Excellency M. Adiwoso Abubakar at the Montebello conference and at the opening cocktail his great desire to promote Indonesian links with Canada. The Gamelan workshop project at University of Montréal can be of some interest in a way that by its active presence in Montréal (speaking of public concerts, Radio, T.V. programmes) it will develop

awareness of Quebec public in general for Indonesia. Therefore, the inherent mandate of the Foundation could be regarded as encountered.<sup>101</sup>

The degree of rapprochement between Indonesia and the Government of Canada came into particularly sharp focus in 1997 when President Suharto's attendance at the Pacific Rim summit—the Montebello conference referenced above—was greeted by protests in Vancouver. Roughly 2000 protesters showed up, and were repelled with pepper spray by members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, sparking public outrage on a national scale.

The Symposium, overall, led to a myriad of cultural, artistic and political outcomes. It highlighted gamelan's pliable capacity as a site for envisioning modernity through the gesture of intercultural exchange. While the opportunity for creative and aesthetic innovation presented itself in Vancouver at Expo, it's clear that gamelan was instrumentalized as a tool for Indonesian diplomacy, implicating and complicating historical dialogues about Eastern/Western exchange. Perhaps more problematically, the Symposium was a theatre where Indonesian nationalist ideology played out, with the delegation of performers conscripted into unsuspecting roles as New Order ambassadors. This delegation, it needs to be said, performed virtually every day for the six months of Expo 86—beyond the four days of the Symposium, they were on stage twice a day, nearly every day for performances at the Indonesia Pavilion. Finally, the broader redistributions of power between East and West can be glimpsed here, one in which gamelan became a vector for exporting and presenting Indonesian sovereignty on a global stage at a critical moment in global geopolitics. At the same time, the Symposium provides a valuable case study of intercultural musical exchange underpinned by political and economic power on both sides.

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<sup>1</sup> This figure, which differs from others, is from Bill Cotter, *Vancouver's Expo 86* (Charleston SC: Arcadia Press, 2009), 8.

<sup>2</sup> Eleanor Wachtel and Robert Anderson, *The Expo Story* (Madeira Park, B.C: Harbour Pub, 1986), 20.

<sup>3</sup> This article, and the research into gamelan at Expo 86 that underpins it, forms a part of a three-year research project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) titled “The Invention of a Balinese tradition in Quebec’s contemporary music scene (1970–2000), led by REDACTED with assistance from REDACTED and REDACTED. One of its goals is to study Canadian works inspired by gamelan, in order to understand the logic of intercultural borrowing that characterizes these fruitful encounters while exploring historical, sociological and ethnomusicological interpretations. In other papers, we have focussed on gamelan-inspired repertoire in Canada, whether in Claude Vivier’s Balinese-inflected work *Pulan dewata* or in José Evangelista’s *O Bali*, in the scores of commissions performed by the Evergreen Club Contemporary Gamelan in Toronto, or in the original creations performed by university gamelans. Studying this repertoire led us directly to the First International Gamelan Festival and Symposium (shortened in this article to ‘the Symposium’) at Expo 86 as a nexus in which the roots of the kinds of phenomena we’re studying become apparent.

<sup>4</sup> On October 11th, 1986; the set was reportedly worth \$30 000 (Canadian dollars) at the time. “SFU Given Expo Legacy,” *The Province*, October 10, 1986, 60.

<sup>5</sup> The subject of Suharto’s legacy on Indonesian politics is complex, unsettled, and still hotly contested by experts. While it is generally agreed that the New Order was often marked by brutal authoritarianism and total suppression of dissidence, “for better or for worse” writes Stefan Elköf, it “provided the most readily available and influential political traditions on which to build a new, reformed political system.” Stefan Elköf, *Power and Political Culture in Suharto’s Indonesia: The Indonesian Democratic Party (DPI) and the Decline of the New Order (1986–1998)* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 3. Indeed, despite the “long-term liabilities” of Suharto’s domestic policies on the international scene, “there can be no denying that Suharto presided over a massive improvement in standards of living for the majority of Indonesians over his thirty-two year tenure.” Michael R. J. Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics Under Suharto: The Rise and Fall of the New Order*, third ed. (New York: Routledge, 1998), xviii.

<sup>6</sup> The authors are grateful for Michael Tenzer’s comments on suggestions.

<sup>7</sup> Manuscript of performances. Exhibit Files, Canada Harbour Corporation fonds. RG153, Volume 53. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Augie Fleuras, *Racisms in a Multicultural Canada: Paradoxes, Politics, and Resistance* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014) and Gareth Stevenson, *Building Nations from Diversity: Canadian and American Experience Compared* (Montréal, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014) as two examples of critiques on official multiculturalism’s deleterious impacts across Canadian life.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions, and World’s Fairs, 1851-1939*, Studies in Imperialism (New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), 3.

<sup>10</sup> Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 3.

<sup>11</sup> Annegret Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World’s Fair* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 15.

<sup>12</sup> Fauser, *Musical Encounters*, 158.

<sup>13</sup> Jose Evangelista, “‘Gamelan East and West’: Proposal for a Gamelan Festival in Conjunction with the 1986 World Exposition in Vancouver, Canada,” [3]. Taken from Evangelista’s personal papers.

<sup>14</sup> Colin McPhee, *A House in Bali* (Boston: Periplus, 2002); and McPhee, *Music in Bali: A Study in Form and Instrumental Organization in Balinese Orchestral Music* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

<sup>15</sup> Announced in *Le Devoir*, November 9 and 22, 1957. We wish to thank Marie-Thérèse Lefebvre for bringing this event to our attention.

<sup>16</sup> “Je suis revenu de là avec cette espèce de certitude qu’on ne pouvait pas sortir cette musique de l’île, qu’elle appartenait à Bali et qu’à peu près aucun des éléments ne pouvait nous servir” (“Rencontre avec Serge Garant,” interview with Maurice Fleuret, *Cahiers canadiens de musique*, autumn-

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hiver 1974), cited in Marie-Thérèse Lefebvre, *Serge Garant et la révolution musicale au Québec* (Montréal: Louise Courteau, 1986), 63.

<sup>17</sup> Audio recording of an interview of Claude Vivier by Kevin Volans, March 1977 in Cologne; Courtesy of the Fondation Vivier.

<sup>18</sup> Letter to a friend dated December 26, 1976, published in *Circuit, musiques contemporaines* 2/1-2 (1991), 73.

<sup>19</sup> Premiered in Toronto on January 28, 1978 by Arraymusic, one of the city's leading new music ensembles.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, their CD *The Road to Ubud* (Artifact Music – ART-021, 1999) containing works by Tenney, Tremblay and Cage, and *Higgs Ocean* (Artifact Music ART-042, 2016), with works by Smith, Sokolovic as well as Michael Oesterle.

<sup>21</sup> *Ear Magazine*, 8/4 (September-November 1983).

<sup>22</sup> See Chapter One of Jay Arms, "Gamelan as World Citizen: American Experimental Music and the Internationalization of Indonesian Arts," (PhD Dissertation, University of California Santa Cruz, 2018), 33-83.

<sup>23</sup> Leta Miller and Frederic Lieberman, "Lou Harrison and the American Gamelan," *American Music* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1999), 146–178.

<sup>24</sup> Brita Renée Heimarck, *Balinese Discourses on Music and Modernization: Village Voices and Urban Views* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 223.

<sup>25</sup> Jennifer Lindsay, "Performing Indonesia Abroad," in *Heirs to the World: Being Indonesian 1960–1985*, eds. Jennifer Lindsay and Maya H. T. Liem (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2012), 198.

<sup>26</sup> Sharyn Elise Jackson, "The Indonesia Controversy at the New York World's Fair 1964–1965." <http://www.nywf64.com/indones08.shtml>, 2010. Accessed May 12, 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Susan Mertens, "Gamelan Festival United Musicians from East and West," *The Vancouver Sun*, August 21, 1986, 27. See also Amna Kusumo, "Report by the Organizing Committee," in *Proceedings of the First International Gamelan Festival and Symposium* (Vancouver: Indonesia Pavilion, Expo 86, 1986) 13.

<sup>28</sup> Arms, "Gamelan as World Citizen, 263.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with I Made Bandem, February 7, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Timothy Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 22.

<sup>31</sup> Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism*, 113.

<sup>32</sup> Sardono, in 1970, was the first to compose and choreograph a version of the dance in the new alternative style of *kecak kreasi*, or *kecak kontemporer*. See Kendra Stepputat, "Performing *Kecak*: a Balinese Dance Routine Between Daily Tradition and Modern Art," *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 44 (2012), 62.

<sup>33</sup> On *Kreasi baru*, see Lisa Gold, *Music in Bali. Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford, 2005), 145-147.

<sup>34</sup> Sumarsam, *Javanese Gamelan and the West* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013; repr. 2015), 43-4.

<sup>35</sup> Andrew Clay McGraw, *Radical Traditions: Reimagining Culture in Balinese Contemporary Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 36.

<sup>36</sup> Jody Diamond, "Sardono Kusumo: a World Without Boundaries," *Balungan* 3/1 (1987), 7.

<sup>37</sup> Personal communication with Jody Diamond, 26 February 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Jody Diamond, "Indonesia Group EXPO '86," *Balungan* 3/1 (1987), 21.

<sup>39</sup> "The First International Gamelan Festival: Programs for Visiting Gamelan Groups," Program Archive, Gamelan Son of Lion.

[http://gamelansonoflion.org/GamelanProgramArchive/1986/1986.8.18-20\\_EXPO.Vancouver.pdf](http://gamelansonoflion.org/GamelanProgramArchive/1986/1986.8.18-20_EXPO.Vancouver.pdf)

[No Date]. Accessed July 28, 2019.

<sup>40</sup> I Made Bandem, “Keynote Address,” in *Proceedings of the First International Gamelan Festival and Symposium*, 16.

<sup>41</sup> Wayan Lotring’s dates of birth and death are subject to some circumspection.

<sup>42</sup> “The First International Gamelan Festival: Programs for Visiting Gamelan Groups.”

<sup>43</sup> “The First International Gamelan Festival: Programs for Visiting Gamelan Groups.”

<sup>44</sup> Personal Communication with Jody Diamond, 27 February 2020.

<sup>45</sup> Pande Made Sukerta, “Alternative Methods in New Composition for Karawitan,” *Balungan* 12 (2017). 3–16.

<sup>46</sup> The work can be heard on a webpage set up by the ISI Denpasar (Indonesian Institute of the Arts), <http://repository.isi-ska.ac.id/219/>

<sup>47</sup> “The First International Gamelan Festival: Programs for Visiting Gamelan Groups.” Several works by Festival participants like Sukerta and Subono can be heard on the CD *New Music Indonesia Vol. 2 (Central Java) Asian Gamelan* (Lyrichord – LYRCD 7420, 1989), produced by Jody Diamond and Larry Polansky.

<sup>48</sup> Made Bandem, ‘Keynote address,’ 16.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Made Bandem.

<sup>50</sup> Jody Diamond, “Review: Out of Indonesia: Global Gamelan,” *Ethnomusicology* 42/1(1998): 174–83; 179.

<sup>51</sup> Judith Becker, “One Perspective on Gamelan in America,” *Asian Music* 15/1 (1983), 87.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Ed Herbst, March 23, 2019. Herbst tactfully refused to name the American composer who received this censure.

<sup>53</sup> McGraw, *Radical Traditions*, 48.

<sup>54</sup> Judith Becker, *Traditional Music in Modern Java: Gamelan in a Changing Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1980), 36.

<sup>55</sup> Becker, *Traditional Music in Modern Java*, 48. It should be noted that gamelan isn’t a ‘purely’ oral tradition at all, but Becker’s point remains salient for its emphasis on the interfacing of tradition with contemporaneity

<sup>56</sup> McGraw, *Radical Traditions*, 104.

<sup>57</sup> McGraw, *Radical Traditions*, 69.

<sup>58</sup> Becker, *Traditional Music in Modern Java*, 45.

<sup>59</sup> Becker, *Traditional Music in Modern Java*, 49.

<sup>60</sup> Becker, *Traditional Music in Modern Java*, 64.

<sup>61</sup> Phillip Yampolsky, “Forces for Change in the Regional Performing Arts of Indonesia,” *Bijdragen Tot De Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde* 151/4 (1995): 700–725.

<sup>62</sup> Claire Holt, *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 257.

<sup>63</sup> “While the Indonesian State is promoting unity,” she writes, “Indonesia’s art will always be richer for its diversity.” Holt, *Arts in Indonesia*, 263.

<sup>64</sup> McGraw notes that “Through their sometimes implicit deconstruction of tradisi, experimental composers exposed the double, if not false, consciousness produced through the alienating effects of touristic subjectivity. *Radical Traditions*, 71.

<sup>65</sup> While we have provided a partial description of the events at the symposium as well as concerts, readers are encouraged to consult John H. Chalmers Jr.’s detailed overview of the events in the journal *Balungan* 2/3 (1986), 3–16.

<sup>66</sup> Made Bandem, “Keynote Address,” 15.

<sup>67</sup> Made Bandem, “Keynote Address,” 15.



<sup>68</sup> In the original address, Bandem identifies them as “Indonesia Group Expo 86.” The ensemble is likewise identified in various sources this way, but for the sake of consistency in this article we have used EXPO Group throughout.

<sup>69</sup> Ed Herbst, “What, Where, and How is Gamelan?,” in *Proceedings from the First International Gamelan Festival and Symposium*, 53.

<sup>70</sup> Herbst, “What, Where and How is Gamelan?,” 53.

<sup>71</sup> Martin Bartlett, “Growing Orchids in Greenhouses,” in *Proceedings from the First International Gamelan Festival and Symposium*, 56.

<sup>72</sup> Bartlett, “Growing Orchids in Greenhouses,” 55.

<sup>73</sup> Bartlett, “Growing Orchids in Greenhouses,” 57.

<sup>74</sup> Bartlett, “Growing Orchids in Greenhouses,” 60.

<sup>75</sup> Comment from Tenzer, August 1, 2019.

<sup>76</sup> Mack, a German composer who has spent many years living and teaching in Indonesia, ultimately was unable to attend the Symposium, and had his paper read in absentia.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with Dieter Mack, March 6, 2019.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Dieter Mack, March 6, 2019.

<sup>79</sup> Lindsay, “Performing Indonesia Abroad,” 199.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Ed Herbst, March 23, 2019.

<sup>81</sup> See Adrian Vickers, *Bali: a Paradise Created*, 2nd ed. (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle, 2012) for an account of the role tourism played in the cultivation of foreign policy throughout Indonesia’s history following independence. Vickers notes that while Suharto’s regime was invested in promoting culture abroad, the practice was more aggressively put in place during Sukarno’s years in power (252).

<sup>82</sup> Susan Mertens, “Monkey Trance Dance was an Authentic, Joyful Experience,” *The Vancouver Sun*, August 16, 1986, 50.

<sup>83</sup> May Wyman, “Exotic Program,” *The Province*, August 17, 1986, 60.

<sup>84</sup> Henry Spiller, *Javaphilia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2015), 7.

<sup>85</sup> Spiller, *Javaphilia*, 183.

<sup>86</sup> Benjamin Brinner, “The Ecology of Musical Transmission between Indonesia and the United States,” *Ars Orientalis*, <https://asia.si.edu/essays/article-brinner/> Accessed March 18, 2020.

<sup>87</sup> Heimarck, *Balinese Discourses on Music and Modernization*, 222.

<sup>88</sup> Quoted in Spiller, *Javaphilia*, 7.

<sup>89</sup> Besides Heimarck and McGraw, see Rachmi Diyah Larasati, *The Dance That Makes You Vanish Cultural Reconstruction in Post-Genocide Indonesia* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

<sup>90</sup> Meghan Hynson, “Indonesian Angklung: Intersections of Music Education and Cultural Diplomacy,” *Ars Orientalis*, <https://asia.si.edu/essays/article-hynson/> Accessed March 18, 2020.

<sup>91</sup> A number of chapters in the collection *Performing Ethnomusicology* (edited by Ted Solís) engage with issues of teaching and performing gamelan in the West. Alongside broader problematics of representation, exoticism, appropriation, reflexivity, and authenticity, these essays account for individual community and institutional histories of Javanese and Balinese performance in the U.S. See chapters by Sumarsam, Vetter, Harnish, as well as interviews with Hardja Susillo and Mantle Hood in Ted Solís, ed. *Performing Ethnomusicology: Teaching and Representation in World Music Ensembles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>92</sup> Hynson.

<sup>93</sup> Becker, “One Perspective on Gamelan in America,” *Asian Music* 15/1 (1983), 86.

<sup>94</sup> Jody Diamond, “Review: Out of Indonesia: Global Gamelan,” 177.

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<sup>95</sup> Michael Tenzer, *Balinese Music* (Berkeley: Periplus, 1991) and especially *Gamelan gong kebyar : the Art of Twentieth-Century Balinese Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>96</sup> I Made Bandem, *Gamelan Bali: Di atas panggung sejarah* (Denpasar: STIKOM Bali, 2013).

<sup>97</sup> Michael Scott, "In at the Birth of New Adventure in World Music," *The Vancouver Sun*, April 17, 1993.

<sup>98</sup> Simon Fraser University, *University Affairs*, third trimester, 1986 (page unknown.) Source accessed in José Evangelista's archives.

<sup>99</sup> J. B. Sumarlin, "Closing Address by His Excellency Prof. Dr. J. B. Sumarlin, Minister for National Development Planning for the Republic of Indonesia," *Proceedings of the First International Festival Gamelan Festival and Symposium*, 3.

<sup>100</sup> East Timor Alert Network, "Canada-Indonesia Relations: Human Rights, Military Sales and Trade," *Peace Research* 29/2 (1997), 13.

<sup>101</sup> Memorandum from Mireille La Fleur to John Wiebe, December 8, 1988. From the personal papers of José Evangelista.