

Music and Dance from Java

Lunchtime Concert Series
West Road Concert Hall
Tuesday 16th November

Performed by the Cambridge Gamelan Society and Lila Bhawa Dance Group

Gamelan is a term used to describe a variety of tuned percussion ensembles in Indonesia. The Cambridge Gamelan is a court-style, Central Javanese gamelan known as *Gamelan Duta Laras* ('Ambassador of Harmony'). It arrived in Cambridge in 1983 as a gift from H.E. Dr Sjahabuddin Arifin, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia, and Mr Soepardjo Rustam, Governor of Central Java, to the University of Cambridge, Faculty of Music. On its arrival, the Cambridge Gamelan Society was formed and many performances have taken place over the years in and around Cambridge involving both students and local people.

The ensemble consists of a complete set of instruments in two different tuning systems: *laras sléndro* (a five tone scale) and *laras pélog* (a seven tone scale). In today's performance, the large *pélog* ensemble takes centre stage and is used to accompany the two dances as well as a central piece in the programme, *Ladrang Tirtakencana*. Two soft-style pieces using a small and distinctly different selection of instruments in the *sléndro* tuning have been inserted between the *pélog* works for contrast.

At the heart of most Javanese gamelan music is a central melody or *balungan* ('skeleton') which is played on the bronze, seven-keyed metallophones (*saron* family and *slenthem*). The *balungan* is punctuated by the larger hanging gongs (*gong* and *kempul*) and the horizontally mounted gong pots (*kenong*, *kethuk*, *kempyang*) at the back of the ensemble. These instruments play on certain notes of the *balungan* providing a form or structure for the piece. A number of instruments embellish the *balungan*, notably, in the *pélog* pieces in this performance, the two *bonang* (double rows of gong chimes mounted on a horizontal frame). The small scale *sléndro* compositions, on the other hand, use a variety of different soft-style elaborating instruments to fill out the musical texture. The whole ensemble is co-ordinated by the drummer. In the dances, whilst the music sets the mood, the drummer is interacting more closely with the dancer's individual movements. Particular drum patterns are played in response to specific dance movements.

Programme

- 1) **Gambyong Pangkur:** Ladrang Pangkur *laras pélog pathet barang*
Dancers: Melissa Dewi and Andrea Rutkowski

Originally performed by professional dancing women (*talèdhèk*), *gambyong* is light-hearted dance designed to provide feelings of sweetness, elegance and joy. It is probably named after a famous nineteenth century *talèdhèk* who lived in Surakarta, Central Java. The dance consists mainly of abstract or pure dance movements expressing the charm a young woman. Very popular now for all sorts of social gatherings, ranging from weddings to theatrical performances, for a long time this dance was much appreciated as entertainment at the courts and residences of noblemen.

- 2) Ketawang Subakastawa *laras sléndro pathet sanga*

- 3) Ladrang Tirtakencana *laras pélog pathet nem*

- 4) Ladrang Mugirahayu - srepegan *laras sléndro pathet manyura*

- 5) **Eka Prawira:** Lancaran Singanebah - Ladrang Bima Kurda *laras pélog pathet barang*
Dancer: Andrea Rutkowski

The dance *Eka Prawira* (lit. 'one warrior') portrays a kind of archetypal hero in the process of preparing for battle. During this process, the hero must practise the skills he will need to make use of the Javanese martial arts. The dance is in the strong, dynamic style referred to as *gagah*. It is a fine example of the choreography of S. Maridi, a prominent dancer and choreographer at the Kasunanan Palace in Surakarta. It dates from about 1964.

Lila Bhawa

Lila Bhawa is the UK's premier Indonesian Dance Group. It was established by its Artistic Director, Ni Madé Pujawati, in 2002 and performs regularly in London at the Southbank Centre, LSO St. Luke's, City University, SOAS as well as festivals and venues around the UK and overseas. Its repertoire includes classic and contemporary Javanese and Balinese dance as well as dances from Sunda, Betawi, Sumatra, Sulawesi and Kalimantan. Lila Bhawa currently has some twenty active members.

Dancers: Melissa Dewi and Andrea Rutkowski

Cambridge Gamelan Society

Music Director: Rob Champion

Imogen Aley, Reuben Bance, Liz Blackwell, Lily Casey, Alice Drury, Sophie Madden, Rizka Maulida, Archie Morter, Coby O'Brien, Nadia Singh, William Want, Teng Wei Yeo.

Guest Musicians: Richard Causton, Andrew Fitt, Helen Loth, Peter McMurray, Maria Mendonca, Lindsay Willis.

Acknowledgements

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