

BlueJam Arts Gamelan Training Session  
17th September 2020  
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# Introduction to traditional techniques

These instruments form part of **Dwi Gambira Sari** (Essence of the Two Seas)

This bronze gamelan was commissioned from the late master gamelan maker Pak Tentrem of Solo in Central Java and arrived in the UK in Autumn 2010.

A gamelan is a percussion orchestra and comes in two tunings: Slendro - 5 note tuning  
Pelog - 7 note tuning

We use numbers to refer to the notes - Slendro 1,2 3, 5 ,6

## Respect for the culture and instruments

It is good practice to remove shoes when playing to keep the area clean but also to add to the process of setting up the atmosphere. Not stepping over instruments and saying sorry can add to the theatre but also instilling the reverence for beautiful instruments and music. The big gong is always a good place to start and listen 'to the sound of the universe'

## INSTRUMENTS

Each instrument has a role and a specific mallet - Using the correct beater is essential in order not to cause damage to the instruments.

Gong, Kempul and Kenong and kethuk - These instruments are the punctuating instruments - marking the beats and phrase lengths.

The Drums : The drums guide the players through tempo and rhythm changes.

Kendhang Ageng ( Large drum ) Kendang Ketipung (small ) Ciblon - a medium size drum that often plays the more complex rhythms.

The loud instruments - Saron and Slenthem play the **Balungan** ( Basic tune and structural outline) the bonang support the balungan with interlocking patterns.

**Buka** is the introduction - Call to play - Depending on the piece a saron or bonang player will play this. The main loud instruments join on the last note of the introductory melody along with the big gong.

## **Structural Instruments - Punctuating the phrases and marking the ends of sections:**

- Gong Ageng and Gong Suwukan - Large Hanging Gongs
- Kempul - Smaller hanging gongs - One for each pitch in the scale.  
The Gongs and Kempul are played with large padded mallets
- Kenong: bossed 'pots' suspended on a wooden boxes - string covered beater
- Kethuk and Kempyang : Small pots suspended over a box - String covered beater

## **Balungan Instruments :**

Saron are played with Wooden Mallets

Slenthem : bass of the Gender family - Keys over tube resonators played with round soft edged mallet.

## **Bonang Family**

Bonang: double row of bossed pots suspended on a wooden frame. Played with string covered mallets.

- Bonang Barung - lower of the two
- Bonang Panerus - higher notes

## **Elaborating (Soft ) Instruments**

- Gender - multi octave thin keys over tube resonators - Played with 2 soft edged circular mallets
- Gender Panerus 8ve higher than gender.
- Gambang - wooden keyed xylophone
- Rebab - 2 string fiddle
- Suling - Bamboo Flute
- Siter - Double -strung Zither plucked with thumbs
- Gerong - Male Chorus
- Sinden - Female Vocalist

Rote learning is the usual approach. The Balungan may be written down as an aide memoire. All the elaborating patterns would be memorised.

The easiest form to begin with is

## Lancaran

Unlike Western Music, in Javanese Music the strong note is the last beat of a phrase or Gatra ( 4 beat section) - The Seleh note is the last note of a phrase and the most important which influences the patterns that the soft instruments use.

Lancaran is usually made up of between 2 - 4 Gonggan - Each gonggan is 16 beats in length or four gatra.

## Basic Kendang pattern for Lancaran:

**Lancaran :**                      Buka                      t t p b                      . p . (p)

A:                      . p . <sup>^</sup>p                      . p . <sup>^</sup>p                      . p . <sup>^</sup>p                      . p . (p) - (once only)

B:                      p p p <sup>^</sup>p                      p b p <sup>^</sup>p                      p b p <sup>^</sup>p                      p b p (p) - ( remaining lines)

C:                      b p p b                      p <sup>^</sup>p b p                      p b p <sup>^</sup>p                      p b p (p) - ( Last line)

Suwuk                      p t p <sup>^</sup>                      p b p .                      b p . b                      . p p (.)                      ( ending - slow dow

Kendangan : Sounds    Tak    (t)    Dhun    (d)  
    Ket    (k)    Dha    (b)

The kendang player sets the tempo and marks the rhythm changes during the piece.

	Buka	.	5	3	2	.	5	3	2	.	3	5	(6)
	<sup>^</sup>		V6		<sup>^</sup>		V		<sup>^</sup>		V1		<sup>^</sup>
.	3	.	5	.	6	.	5	.	6	.	5	.	1
	<sup>^</sup>		V6		<sup>^</sup>		V6		<sup>^</sup>		V1		<sup>^</sup>
.	3	.	5	.	6	.	5	.	6	.	5	.	1
	<sup>^</sup>		V6		<sup>^</sup>		V6		<sup>^</sup>		V1		<sup>^</sup>
.	3	.	2	.	3	.	2	.	3	.	2	.	1
	<sup>^</sup>		V6		<sup>^</sup>		V6		<sup>^</sup>		V1		<sup>^</sup>
.	3	.	2	.	3	.	2	.	3	.	2	.	1

# Lancaran : Ricik ricik

## Balungan

### KEY

- ^ - Kenong
- v6 - Kempul
- ( ) - Gong

Gong Ageng plays the last note of the buka and everyone else also enters at this point.

The smaller gong plays at the end of each line - The big gong is played at the end of the sequence.

## Bonang Patterns

Gembyang - Octaves -

Mipil - Alternating notes

Imbal - Interlocking melody

Saron . 3 . 5 . 6 . 5 .  
Bonang 5/5 . 5/5 . 5/5 . 5/5 .

B Panerus 5 5 5 5 5 5

Mipil - Alternating notes

Saron . 3 . 5 . 6 . 5 .

Bonang 3 5 3 5 6 5 6 5

B.panerus 3 5 3 . 3 5 3 5 6 5 6 . 6 5 6 5