GAMELAN AND THE MODERN PEDAL HARP OF THE WEST: A PERFORMER’S PERSPECTIVE ON HYBRIDIZED MUSICAL INFLUENCES IN THE HARP CHAMBER WORKS OF BILL ALVES, LOU HARRISON, AND ALAN HOVHANESS

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alok. Short vocal phrases, sometimes of indefinite or indeterminate pitch, inserted within a piece (usually by men) to enhance the mood. Examples of a-é (hake), lol-lol-lo, woi, etc. {= shout, yell}*

balungan. An underlying melody, which may be realized or implied by one or more melodic instruments {= skeleton, frame}*

batik. Dyed textiles produced with wax resist.*

bentuk. One of the formal structures of composition in karawitan.*

bhiksu. Male Buddhist monks who, along with brahman helped generate and disseminate the spread of Hinduism and Buddhism among receptive local rulers in Indonesia.

bodhisattava. Enlightened being in Mahāyāna Buddhist devotional practice and philosophy.

bonang barung. The mid-range instrument in the bonang family.*

bonang panerus. The highest-pitched and smallest instrument in the bonang family.*

brahma. The highest member of the Hindu caste system, responsible for disseminating the spread of Hinduism and Buddhism among receptive local rulers in Indonesia.

dhalang. The puppeteer in a wayang kulit performance.*

embat. A comparison of the smallness or the largeness of a particular gamelan tuning, the relative tuning of a gamelan or the intervallic structure of a gamelan.*

gambang. A xylophone with wooden or bamboo keys suspended over a wooden trough.*

gamelan gadhon. A small gamelan without saron or bonang, and often having no other punctuating instruments, but usually refers to an ensemble with a fixed location.*

gamelan gong kebyar. “The process of flowering,” refers to the explosive changes in tempo and dynamics characteristic of Balinese gamelan.

gantung. This practice suspends a melodic unit and varies between instruments, “to hang.”

garap(an). Way of working or fashioning; specifically the way in which an instrumental part realizes the balungan or the ‘inner melody.’*

gåtrå. A metrical unit of gamelan gendhing.*
gâtrâ gantung(an). A gâtrâ in which the melodic line remains on the same note.*

gender. An instrument with thin bronze or brass keys, each suspended over a tube resonator.*

gendhing. A generic term for a gamelan composition.*

gérong. A unison male chorus that sings with a gamelan.*

gongan. A formal structure marked at the end by a stroke on a hanging gong.*

gong ageng. The largest hanging gong in a gamelan.*

gong suwuk(an). A large hanging gong, smaller than gong ageng, larger than kempul.*

imbal. A style of playing in which two identical or similar instruments, or two players on the same instrument, or two hands on one instrument, play interlocking parts forming a single more or less repetitive melodic pattern.*

irâmâ. Refers to the different tempo relationships within a gongan or gendhing: irâmâ is the expanding and contracting structural units such as the gâtrâ and the degree or level at which the gâtrâ is subdivided (or filled in).*

kâla. Hindu measurements of time or duration.

karawitan. Gamelan music and associated singing, defined by the use of the slendro and/or pélog scales.*

kempul. A hanging gong, smaller than a gong ageng and gong suwukan.*

kempyang. An instrument of the gamelan, a rack with two small, horizontally suspended gongs.*

kenong. A large horizontally suspended gong.*

kethuk. A small horizontally suspended gong.*

klenégan. A performance of gamelan music that does not include dance or theatre.

kraton. A royal palace; in Yogyakarta or Surakarta.*

laras. 1 Tuning system: see also embat. 2 scale: see also pathet. 3 note or degree of scale. 4 pitch. 5 harmonious sound.*

pathet. A modal classification system implying tonal range (tessitura), melodic patterns and principle notes.*
**pekingan.** The part played by the saron panerus (a.k.a. peking), incorporates double density playing, which has more notes per metrical unit.

**pélog.** Tuning system in which the octave is divided into seven unequal intervals.*

**pesindhén.** A solo female singer in the gamelan.*

**priyaji.** Court-associated aristocratic class who were patrons of the arts in the Indonesian pre-colonial age.

**saron.** Any of a family of metallophones whose keys rest on low trough resonators.*

**saron panerus.** The small-sized, high register saron.*

**séléh.** To ‘settle’ or ‘come to rest.’ The goal tone, or ending tone, of a melodic phrase. The last pitch of any even-numbered gatrâ.*

**senggakan.** Phrases or nonsense syllables inserted within the main vocal melody of a gendhing sung by members of the gérong; they may be one, two or four gatrâ in length.*

**sléndro.** The tuning category in which the octave is divided into five intervals, which are more uniform than those of the pélog category.*

**slenthem.** A large-keyed, single-octave metallophone, tuned one octave below the saron demung, whose thin keys are suspended over bamboo or metal resonators (gender family).*

**sorogan.** Pêlog tones that sometimes alternate with the usual tones of a given pêlog pathet, an “unorthodox pitch,” similar to an accidental in Western music.*

**suling.** An end-blown Javanese vertical wooden flute.*

**suwuk.** The end of a piece.*

**suwuk gropak.** A suwuk that speeds up rather than slows down.*

**tabuh.** A beater for striking instruments of the gamelan.*

**wayang.** A generic term referring to any traditional dramatic performance accompanied by gamelan.*

**wayang golek.** A performance with three-dimensional wooden puppets, representing stories from the Menak cycle.*
Wayang kulit. Drama with flat leather puppets that create shadows on a screen, traditionally accompanied by a sléndro gamelan, usually depicting stories from the Mahabharata and Ramayana epics.*

Wayang menak. Wayang kulit with stories illustrating the Panca Sila (political principles of Indonesian republic).

Wayang orang (= wayang wong). [“people”] Dance drama with spoken dialogue and stories based upon the Mahabarata and Ramayana epics, accompanied by both a sléndro and a pélog gamelan. Incorporates live, costumed actors in the place of puppets.*

Chapter 1
Introduction

On the first page of Lou Harrison’s (1917-2003) music manuscript for “Avalokiteśvara” the composer hastily scribbled in pencil on the top right-hand corner the page, “A harp is a machine for building blocks.”¹ In retrospect, it is clear that Harrison foresaw the innate potential of the harp as an instrument that could both expand upon complex musical ideas as well as explore a variety of timbres outside the Western classical realm. Like Harrison, American world-music composers Alan Hovhaness (1911-2000) and Bill Alves (1960-), also recognized the harp’s compositional possibilities and further exposed the harp to a hybridized musical world that cleverly blended Indonesian gamelan music practices with Western formal structures and perspectives.

The Western assimilation of gamelan musical philosophies into music that incorporated the harp was a slow, yet steady process. Technological advances in cross-cultural communications have characterized the latter decades of the twentieth and the early decades of the twenty-first century and are a major factor in the intercultural encounters that have given rise to fusions of Western and Eastern music. Increased international exposure through print, radio, television, and the Internet has softened the lines of division between disparate societies. Day by day, as nations converge and largely isolated cultures open their doors to new ideas and concepts, it is becoming more and more important to seek cultural awareness and understanding.

In regard to music for the Indonesian gamelan, European foreign domination, the blending of Hindu and Islamic religious and musical culture via trade, and local modernization

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¹ Lou Harrison, Avalokiteśvara, Box 24:4 MS.132, Ser. 1, #4, Special Collections Exhibits, Lou Harrison Archive, University of California Santa Cruz Library, Santa Cruz, CA.
and globalization have continued to generate outward ripples that constantly shape and alter the face of the musical atmosphere in Java and Bali. For composers or performers of music inspired by the gamelan, it is prudent to recognize that the hybridization of music in both the classical and popular realms is pervasive, and one must be vigilant in order to avoid exploitation or dilution of such a distinctive and highly complex artistic history. T.H. Pigeaud described the frustration scholars experience in the face of musical hybridization, stating,

> Evolution, where it can be traced as a result of the influence of modern times, is seldom, if ever, displayed by a few great artists, but can only be charted in slow change and in new trends appearing within certain circles, often without anyone being aware either of who introduced them or who devised them. Therefore there is little sense in giving a report on indigenous musical life and so on in a certain year; one would be able to mention very little, if anything, of any importance.²

Determining musical authenticity requires accounting for thousands of years of musical legacy, change, and cultural interaction. However, performers and scholars can agree upon enduring characteristic local and regional styles without insensitive generalizations. Making an effort to understand the spiritual and musical context of these practices is therefore crucial. One must ask oneself: “How does this particular society conceptualize its worldview? What are the origins of this worldview? How does the collective worldview of a multi-ethnic society as a whole influence commonly accepted views and opinions about music, religion, politics, and more?” Such an empathetic understanding not only seeks to generate compassion and acceptance toward other nations but also shows great respect for an abundant history of musical tradition and cultural idioms.

Introduction to the Indonesian Gamelan

The Indonesian gamelan originated in the Indonesian archipelago, a land of thousands of islands, more than two hundred languages, and a wide variety of belief systems. No other musical ensemble has flourished so successfully across the multi-ethnic regions of Asia. Historically, gamelans and their collective individual instruments have served multiple functions in order to maintain a local sense of spiritual and social balance at pivotal points in the lives of Javanese and Balinese people in particular. The gamelan tradition is a spiritual vehicle reinforcing and transmitting Indonesian beliefs, feelings, and thoughts. Gamelan performance sustains the status, dignity, and legacy of a specific community, its imbedded societal hierarchy, political beliefs, and internal and external connections. The sights and sounds of the gamelan continue to be presented in public festivals, private rituals, meditations, and other art forms, as for example in popular shadow puppet plays (wayang kulit), dance performances, paintings, batik textiles, stone carvings, and more. Despite the later inclusion of the solo female vocalist (pesindhén) in some gamelan performances, the orchestral goal continues to be a perfect unification among the instruments, reflecting the Javanese and Balinese preference for balance and serenity in their musical traditions and in life itself.³

A gamelan consists of small and large metallic instruments that are visually and aurally linked by their tuning and décor. A traditional full-size Balinese or Javanese gamelan often includes knobbed gongs and several barred instruments made of bronze, along with a small number of stringed instruments, wooden flutes, and drums. In order to maintain the balanced dynamic within a gamelan, each individual instrument rhythmically and stylistically complements the others through pre-established patterns and performance practices. These practices differ between Balinese and Javanese stylistic traditions, but, to generalize, each instrument has its own playing style and distinctive timbre and range. In Java, this distinctive style is called *garap* and is an instrument-specific pattern that skilled Indonesian gamelan players can both recognize and reproduce. Richard Pickvance defines *garap* as a “way of working or
fashioning; specifically the way in which an instrumental part realizes the *balungan* or the ‘inner melody’... Each decorating instrument has a range of possible treatment for the same *balungan.*”

Beyond the music itself, gamelan compositions are associated with a particular meaning or feeling (*rasa*) and are carefully chosen to suit or enhance a specific spiritual or social event. As a spiritual discipline, gamelan music can function as a vehicle for meditation and reflection. Because it incorporates cyclical aspects of time, directional awareness, and spiritual symbolism in the music and in performance practice, informed listeners can hope to achieve a greater understanding of what the Javanese refer to as a “way of being.”

As a result of recurring melodic and rhythmic patterns, the mind is gradually quieted and the heart rate slowed or quickened in response to the character of the piece. The music entices listeners to contemplate aspects of their own internal and external reality, such as the personal purification of mind or appropriate demeanor in social interaction.

The Javanese and Balinese view time as cyclical rather than linear, and notions of repetition and connection permeate the gamelan worldview. In fact, the rule of a linked and cyclical order, reflecting the Hindu cycles of life, is believed to be the law of the universe. The repetitive and periodic tolls of the gongs remind listeners and players that each performance of a musical piece is both a symbol of contemporary thinking and of ageless tradition as represented on the constantly turning wheel of life. Therefore, the continual blending and assimilation of new ideas and concepts with those of the past is characteristic of Javanese and Balinese religious culture as a whole. Musical and historical past and present coincide within the same

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performance. It is therefore no easy task to determine what is ‘original’ and what is ‘new’ in Indonesian music, dance, and drama.

Hindu cosmology is expressed in the dualistic nature of gamelan performance, including two different tuning systems (pélog and sléndro), loud and soft dynamics, and fast or slow contrasting sections of a gamelan piece, often with a mix of voice and instrumentation. Gamelan bilateral symmetry is based on the halving or doubling of the balungan, the inner, skeletal melody, that is most often played by saron instruments that provide the most essential tones in the musical scale. A saron stands about twenty centimeters high, normally has seven bronze bars placed on top of a resonating frame, and is played by a performer seated on the floor striking with a short-handled wooden or metal mallet (tabuh). The balungan core melody, with its similar rhythm and smaller range, is played on the slenthem instruments, which consist of sets of bronze keys that play a single octave: there are five pitches used when playing the sléndro scale and seven when playing the pélog. These bronze keys are suspended by leather cords over individual bamboo-tube resonators in a wooden frame, also struck with a tabuh mallet; the tubes are cut and placed so the bamboo's node causes the functional length of the resonator to be shorter for higher notes. In each case one hand is left free to dampen notes.

Different instruments, in pre-established patterns, layer above and below the balungan to create a stratified melodic and rhythmic structure that is called the irama. The motives, or melodic fragments, that ornament these pre-established patterns, emphasize and deemphasize particular pitches in order to demarcate a particular mode, called pathet. Pathets are pentatonic, using five pitches from either pélog or sléndro scales. Various moods, feelings, and emotions are associated with different pathets, which accompany certain settings and acts in dance, drama, or shadow puppet theater performances.
Gamelan music is performed in a rhythmic and metrical colotomic structure (Javanese bentuk) or gendhing structure, which depends on a mixture of instruments to mark off timed intervals, by dividing rhythmic time into cycles of differing length and complexity. Gamelan uses gongs of various sizes in marking time: the kempyang, ketuk, kempul, kenong, gong suwukan, and gong ageng. Fast-playing kempyang and ketuk keep a regular beat; the larger gongs are struck together in groups, once per sub-divided beat cycle. Gong cycles last for units of eight, sixteen, thirty-two, sixty-four, or more beats, but most often a thirty-two-beat cycle, which is then repeated until the players are cued by the drum leader who sits at the center of the gamelan orchestra.

**Background and Purpose: Gamelan Music and the West**

The sights, sounds, and forms of iconic Indonesian gamelan music have their own idioms that for centuries Western composers have made varied efforts to reproduce. The most recognized Western classical composer credited with having paved the way for Western and Eastern hybridizations was Claude Debussy (1862-1918). Debussy incorporated Eastern musical elements in his solo piano and orchestral works, including “Pagodes” from Estampes. Debussy made no clear indication that this piece was directly inspired by the gamelan, but scholars have made attempts to connect “Pagodes” to Debussy’s exposure to, and subsequent admiration of, a Javanese gamelan at the Paris Exhibition Universelle in 1889.6 These works by Debussy, despite their superficial orientalist representations of the pentatonic scale and aural imitation of the Indonesian gongs, further reinforced Western classical composers’ departures from earlier Romantic styles and trends. For the next century and beyond, Southeast Asian, Indian, and East Asian compositional elements were subject to various levels of exploitation, imitation, or

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refinement by Western composers such as Bela Bartok, Olivier Messiaen, Benjamin Britten, Harry Partch, Alan Hovhaness, Lou Harrison, John Cage, and others. Hybridity scholar and Western gamelan teacher and performer Sumarsam enlightens us on the complex nature of cultural cross-fertilization, stating:

Underlying the cultural transformation process is transculturation, a complex process of cultural transition... Hand in hand with the transcultural transformation process is the phenomenon of networking, interconnected chains of multiple agencies seen synchronically and diachronically. Both processes bring about cultural hybridization, transplantation, appropriation, adaptation, and cross-fertilization.⁷

American composers such as Bill Alves, Lou Harrison, and Alan Hovhaness have gone one step farther in the Western borrowing of Eastern music and have written compositions for specialized combinations of Western and non-Western instruments. The harp has been employed in these hybridized orchestrations and plays a key musical role in the transmission of gamelan-influenced formal structure, melodic style, and rhythmic patterns in various compositions. This dissertation explores a specific aspect of the hybridization process previously described by Sumarsam in order to provide a new approach to the study and performance of ethnically inspired harp music.

I will discuss the Western assimilation of gamelan musical ideas and performance practices as they are presented in various solo and chamber works for the double-action pedal harp. I argue that these Western examples of harp solos and harp chamber music contain notation, instrumentation, and sounds that are directly modeled after or inspired by gamelan musical elements through the composition’s structure, rhythm, melody, ornamentation, intonation, and choice of instrumentation or orchestration. In particular, these compositional devices and cultural artifacts include, but are not limited to, cyclical phrase structures (colotomic

patterns), non-Western scales and tunings, Eastern melodic ornaments, and rhythmic markers. This study examines the musical and cultural artifacts that characterize fusions of Indonesian gamelan music with Western classical music as found in contemporary compositions for the double-action pedal harp.

In particular, I have selected for study a work by Bill Alves from 2004, works by Lou Harrison spanning the years 1964 to 1991, and works written by Alan Hovhaness between 1951 and 1971. The pieces discussed are grouped by composer, beginning with those that exhibit the most obvious gamelan influences, and then extending to the more subjective influences. The ultimate goal has been to discover these influences without a great deal of assumption that these influences are in the pieces. A full contextual and musical analysis of the *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan* by composer Bill Alves begins the dissertation followed by a section on works by Lou Harrison including “Paragrafo 7a” from *La Koro Sutro*, “In Honor of the Divine Mr. Handel” from *Homage to Pacifica*, and an argument for Indonesian influences in “Avalokiteśvara” from his larger Korean-inspired work titled *Four Pieces for Harp*.

Selected Eastern-influenced chamber works by Alan Hovhaness provide examples of more ambiguous representations of gamelan musical elements. However, components of Indonesian religious and musical philosophy add further clarity to the context of each work. The pieces by Hovhaness under review include *Upon Enchanted Ground* op. 90/1, *The Flowering Peach* op. 125, and lastly, the chamber work, *Island of Mysterious Bells* op. 244.

In his pieces derived from non-Western traditions that are not solos or concertos, Hovhaness used the harp in a functional manner such as a unifying metaphor for extra-musical associations. In *The Flowering Peach*, for example, the harp can be viewed as a metaphor for water, and through repetitive motif patterns, is used as a musical medium to halt harmonic and
melodic momentum. The harp can also function as a drone, similar to a large gong, to sustain the fundamental pitch of a particular mode. These elements and more will be discussed and analyzed in further depth throughout this dissertation.

To demonstrate the method of musical analysis that will be used in this dissertation, an excerpt from the third movement in the *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan* by Alves serves as an example (see fig. 1.2). The *bonang barung, bonang panerus, slenthem, kenong, saron,* and *gong ageng* accompany the harp solo each with its own single-bar melodic and rhythmic motives that repeat in a cyclical pattern. The supporting parts resemble layers of stratified rock, each with its own distinctive rhythmic motive, musical color, pattern, and shape that visually and aurally stack on top of one another. The Javanese advocate that every instrument is equal, and this is reflected by each having its own individual part that should not predominate or be too quiet. Each part is equally important in order to maintain a balanced dynamic in the gamelan ensemble.

![Figure 1.2. Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan, “II,” mm. 37-39, cyclical rhythmic patterns that demonstrate musical strata.](image-url)
Review of Literature

There are hundreds of valuable sources available on Javanese gamelan notation, performance practice, and history, but none of these specifically focuses on the Indonesian gamelan as it relates to the modern pedal harp. Due to the paucity of current scholarship and performance, I drew parallels from multiple Western sources and formed conclusions by analyzing the scores, looking closely through composition lists, and reviewing interviews. Additionally, I interpreted Asian, Indian, and Southeast Asian spiritual and philosophical perspectives on music, examined musical criticisms, listened to specific recordings, read through the recordings’ associated performance notes, and studied the importance of biographical and historical events that shaped the evolution of each composer’s musical style.

In particular, the biographies of Lou Harrison have been especially helpful. Harrison is credited for his inventive hybridization of the Javanese gamelan with Western instruments and his use of the harp with gamelan instruments. Books from the 1990s by Leta E. Miller and Frederic Lieberman, *Lou Harrison*, and Heidi von Gunden, *The Music of Lou Harrison*, are equally valuable for their analyses of dozens of Harrison’s works. The books contain personal quotations and stories about the historical context of the pieces and comprehensive listings of his works with their respective instrumentations. These sources also introduce important composers of ethnically inspired music such as Harrison’s teacher, Henry Cowell (1897-1965). Cowell had an enormous influence on Harrison’s distinctly non-Western style, and von Gunden provides additional reference to sources that specifically focus on the writings, lectures, and compositions of Harrison.

While Harrison was one of the leading composers of Western gamelan music in America, the twenty-first century Indonesian gamelan musician and teacher Sumarsam is one of the
leading scholars of gamelan culture in the West. Born in Indonesia, Sumarsam is well-versed in his knowledge of social and intellectual perspectives in Javanese music. Sumarsam received two graduate degrees from American universities, Wesleyan University and Cornell University, where he focused on world music and Southeast Asian studies. He is also a prolific writer on Javanese gamelan, and three of his publications focus on cultural interaction in and around Indonesia.

In his book *Gamelan: Cultural Interaction and Musical Development in Central Java*, Sumarsam takes a close look at various Indonesian religious traditions, notably Hinduism and Islam, and how religiously inspired music and art was the unifying force that promoted links between nobles and artists in Javanese society. As a native of Java, the author provides an insider’s view of Javanese compositional processes, how these processes relate to specific periods in history, the emergence of complex ideas and melodic concepts, and the explanation of traditional literary works that were linked to or inspired by gamelan music.

Sumarsam goes one step further in his book *Javanese Gamelan and the West*, by taking globalization into account and explaining the process and influences of hybridization in contemporary Indonesia starting in the colonial period. He emphasizes the Western popular and theatrical influences in the nineteenth century that influenced Indonesian experimental music, opera productions, and wayang performance in American and European academic institutions.

Judith Becker, head of the Southeast Asian Studies Department at the University of Michigan in the early twenty-first century, provides a picture of the West and its influence in the early twenty-first century in her book, *Traditional Music in Modern Java: Gamelan in a Changing Society*. Despite its depth, this publication remains focused on intricate issues associated with traditional and emerging contemporary values in Javanese musical tradition.
Becker evaluates and explains heated discussions that concern the effect of politics on music and presents multiple arguments in regard to the influence of Western notation on traditional Javanese music.

From the perspective of gamelan musical analysis and accurate performance practice, Susan Walton is a key figure in understanding how to apply these analytical tools. Walton’s publication *Mode in Javanese Music* analytically breaks apart what she describes as the “inner melodies by means of melodic formulas” in each instrument and how these formulas have changed over time.\(^8\) It is commonly understood amongst Indonesian performers and scholars that notation is uncharacteristic of early gamelan traditions—oral transmission had been the method of melodic preservation for centuries. Walton claims that modern Javanese gamelan practices have preserved the music not simply by the use of notation but by the predictable nature of performance. This source was extremely valuable as I endeavored to recognize rhythmic patterns and melodic formulas in Western works that may provide a clear indication of the presence of gamelan influences.

Another important book that directly relates to the religious and spiritual discussions in this dissertation is *Rasa*, by Marc Benamou. Benamou’s publication is addressed to an academic audience and is much more than a basic introduction to the gamelan. This book, in addition to its use of common and appropriate terms and companion recordings, offers advice to the reader about how to approach the Indonesian language as a whole and how to make use of notation, particularly when reading his book. Throughout the text he challenges himself to define and explain what he claims is the most elusive word in the Javanese language: *rasa*. This word can mean many things, but in general it is associated with quality, ability, or a state of being.

\(^8\) Walton, 7.
Benamou endeavors to relate this concept to musical taste and feeling. This source has been useful in my attempt to portray the meaning of gamelan music and explore why specific pieces or instrumental choices are symbolic to players and listeners.

Other sources proved beneficial as they contain similar introductory formats and content. Javanese-related publications include Jennifer Lindsay’s *Javanese Gamelan: Traditional Orchestra of Indonesia*, and the second edition of Jeff Todd Titon’s *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World’s Peoples*. Additional sources that provide historical context and portray Javanese spiritual associations to the gamelan from the perspective of Westerners include the journal articles by Mantle Hood titled “Javanese Gamelan Sekati. Its Sanctity and Age,” and an account from the 1889 *Musical Times* journal titled “The Javanese ‘Gamelan.’” I could not possibly hope to discuss the harp and the gamelan without including specific scores for analytical study. As mentioned previously, I have studied the performance notes and notation of several Alves, Harrison, and Hovhaness scores for solo harp or harp, gamelan, and additional instruments.

**Methodology**

This study serves as an introduction for Western instrumentalists and composers seeking to 1) understand how non-Western music from the gamelan tradition is experienced in its original context, 2) recognize various compositional methods and tools Western composers employ in order to recreate or imitate non-Western instruments, melodies, rhythms, and formal structures, 3) explore specific repertoire for the harp that expresses non-Western influences, and 4) expand their working knowledge of the background and compositional styles of Bill Alves, Lou Harrison, and Alan Hovhaness.
My approach to this study is centered on historical and analytical research. First, I cite information from leading scholars about the gamelan’s complex historical, cultural, and spiritual context as a foundational background for readers. Second, I draw parallels between my own analyses of chamber and solo works for pedal harp and those of traditional gamelan compositions to determine the presence of Southeast Asian stylistic influences. Third, I examine the concept of musical authenticity and hybridization and its importance to the genre of “world music.”

The musical analyses contribute both a broad and a detailed understanding of these works but do not provide a harmonic analysis in the traditional Western classical sense of Roman numerals and harmonic hierarchies as they relate to cadences. My analyses are based upon the Western compositional methods in which a composer groups, sustains, and layers melodies and rhythms in order to create generalized yet similar aural representations, scales, textures, and formal structures to those found in Javanese and Balinese gamelan music. The small- and large-scale interaction, repetition, and layering of various melodic and rhythmic patterns or motives in the instruments of the gamelan and harp have been assessed and described. This is especially true when interlocking or repeated cyclical patterns are present in the composition.

Western composers characteristically recreate and blend Indonesian gamelan style, tuning, and form with Western classical structures by using five different methods. The following methods are derived from my own experiences but are influenced by the work of Neil Sorrell. The first method uses traditional Indonesian compositional procedures but combines Western instruments with the gamelan. These instruments are specially tuned to match the fixed-

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9 Neil Sorrell describes five similar methods in which composers have accommodated or adjusted to gamelan tuning in particular. For more information see Neil Sorrell, “Issues of Pastiche and Illusions of Authenticity in Gamelan-Inspired Composition,” Indonesia and the Malay World 35, no. 101 (March 2007): 32.
pitches of the traditional gamelan set. Lou Harrison touched upon this method in the second movement of his *Homage to Pacifica* titled “In Homage to the Divine Mr. Handel.” I expanded upon this movement in Chapter 4.

The second method is the most direct, yet most challenging for Western composers unfamiliar with traditional gamelan practices. In this method, the Western composer writes a composition for Indonesian gamelan and uses cipher notation, traditional forms, and instrumental patterns characteristic of current practices in Indonesia. The piece is performed on the traditional gamelan set and not adapted for Western instruments.

The third method has two tiers and uses the traditionally tuned gamelan but negates Indonesian large-scale forms. A resulting composition is structured around Western classical forms (such as sonata form) and may often use the gamelan in combination with Western notation or instruments. The first tier of this method places a Western pitched instrument (equal temperament, just intonation, etc.) against the traditional tuning of the gamelan to allow for a unique tonal contrast. The second tier requires a hybrid tuning in which the Western instrument alternates aspects of the traditional gamelan tuning and equal temperament or some similar tuning combination. This tier directly applies to the *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan* by Bill Alves. Written in 2004, this concerto effectively combines the instruments and musical styles of the East and West and is a valuable addition to a growing pool of harp repertoire influenced by non-Western cultures, instruments of the gamelan, and its intriguing melodies and rhythms. This piece will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 3 and 6.

The fourth method is quite rare, but is used by composers interested in more flexibility in their composing and who want to preserve the resonance of the gamelan. These effects can be achieved when a gamelan, commissioned in Indonesia or homemade by the composer or player,
is rendered capable of playing Western scales that reflect equal temperament, just-intonation, or the personal preferences of the composer. For example, the *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan* also exhibits traits of the fourth method depending on the availability of gamelan instruments.

The fifth method removes the gamelan from the composition completely, and Western instruments attempt to replicate its melodic, rhythmic, and formal style in a non-traditional context. This approach to composition is ambiguous and leaves a great deal of interpretation to the listener and performer. The works of Alan Hovhaness (described in Chapter 5) are representative of this method. Manufactured elements that draw their origins from early explorations in orientalist compositional practices can further muddle the line between actual musical traits and haphazard interpretations of early colonialist composers. Further, before Western composers were exposed to Southeast Asian music, these traditions had already experienced a complex history of cross-cultural interaction separate from colonial rule. The influences, for example, can sound like the gamelan or can even sound like another performance tradition, such as Indian raga. An interesting case is Harrison’s “Avalokiteśvara”; it has similar aspects of blended Korean, Indian, and Indonesian musical influences.

**Dissertation Organization**

Each chapter of this dissertation has been strategically written to highlight various Western and Eastern musical perspectives on Indonesian history, philosophies, compositions, and individuals, all of which have shaped the complex gamelan tradition to which Western classical music is exposed today. Chapter 2 is an introductory study in musical anthropology that explores the Hindu origins and evolution of gamelan performance practices by broadly tracing

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10 The “oriental” scale (augmented 2nd) or pentatonic scale is an example of a superficial attempt at making a piece sound more Eastern.
the history, development, and transformation of the Indonesian gamelan and performance practice as it was developed in the Javanese kratons, starting at the height of the Majapahit empire.

Chapter 3 provides the reader with a musical analysis of Bill Alves’s *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan* for use in musical study, preparation, and performance. The chapter begins with a biographical overview of the composer that includes background information derived from an interview.\(^{11}\) This background information seeks to illuminate the inspirations and compositional processes that paved the way to the finished product of the *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan*. The second portion of the chapter highlights key aspects of gamelan musical style that are represented in the score. These aspects include the composer’s traditional and non-traditional applications of cyclical repetition, creative stratification of rhythmic and melodic parts, modal mixture, and formal structures.

Chapter 4 begins with a biographical overview of composer Lou Harrison, and then discusses the historical and musical context behind a selection of his large- and small-scale chamber works that include harp. The discussion of each piece offers analytical comments and highlights specific musical excerpts of gamelan musical influences, most especially in formal structure and instrumentation. Additionally, through the study of manuscripts from the Lou Harrison archive at the University of California, Santa Cruz, rare images of harp scores and a note written by Harrison to the original harpist who performed his works are available to readers.

Chapter 5 follows a similar format as Chapter 4 and presents a biographical, contextual, and analytical review of three Alan Hovhaness works. For this chapter, *Island of Mysterious Bells* for four harps (which is no longer in circulation) was specially reprinted by Hovhaness’s

\(^{11}\) Institutional Review Board exempt, Ball State University, April 16, 2015.
widow, Hinako Hovhaness. Further, this chapter provides additional insight into the techniques by which Hovhaness embedded elements of East and Southeast Asian religious philosophy in his Western compositions.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I provide suggestions for further research and summarize the conclusions of my analyses of the selected works by Harrison, Hovhaness, and Alves through the lens of authenticity, in order to highlight the overall musical consistencies and inconsistencies in Western musical thought in relation to the concept of “world music.” Chapter 6 also includes a reflection and in-depth discussion that describes my own experiences learning to play the traditional Javanese gamelan and performing the *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan* by Bill Alves. I contribute recommendations on how an instrumentalist (a harpist in particular) can use this information in practice, and I provide recommendations for further study. Faithfully recreating music inspired by the musical traditions of non-Western cultures is an important concern when distributing parts, rehearsing music, and ultimately adapting a Western instrument to an Eastern tuning and performing tradition.

Taking the time to investigate and draw connections between the music and its historical and cultural context is the first step in this process. In the following chapter I take a deeper look into the complex religious, social, and artistic history of the gamelan as it was shaped by commercial trade in the Indian Ocean maritime network that dominated in the early pre-Majapahit Indonesian era. Ideally, this information provides the potential performer with the tools and insight to successfully present audiences with a sensitive performance of harp chamber music inspired by Southeast Asian music, especially the gamelan.
Chapter 2

An Introduction to the Historical Context and Cultural Influences in Javanese and Balinese Gamelan Performance Practices

Introduction

Javanese and Balinese gamelan is a complex synthesis of various religious and cultural traditions that, over time, were consolidated by royal courts and regional riverine districts into standardized performance practice. The wide dissemination of knowledge and material goods across local, regional, and international trade routes provided cultural diversity that influenced and was selectively incorporated into Indonesian art, architecture, religion, textiles, and more. Over time, Indic Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim traders, priests, and scholars shared their cultural traditions with the populations of the Indonesian archipelago; first South Asian and then Middle Eastern cultural norms were especially appealing to the Indonesian archipelago’s domestic population, who encouraged the secondary migration of Indian clerics, musicians, dancers, architects, and craftsmen.

In Java, the introduction of Hinduism was a gradual process that was made possible by the significant maritime trade networking between the Indonesian archipelago and India.\(^\text{12}\) Centuries of cross-cultural interaction between Indonesians and South Asians via the Indian Ocean maritime network introduced features of South Asian art, architecture, and music into Javanese and Balinese expressive art forms. Thus, elements of Indonesian culture eventually developed a distinctly “Indianized” character that can still be found in modern theatre, dance, and music.

According to anthropologist Stephen Lansing, the gradual process of “Indianization” in Balinese political and social realms was more effectively fostered by arts than through any other agency, including court policies. The performing arts, entrenched in Hindu-Buddhist philosophy, influenced societal structure through their portrayal of ancient Indian epics and poetry that offer models of behavior in wider society. This localization of Hindu ideologies was not a singular event but a series of compromises enacted by countless courts and villages who were visited by traveling artists, performers, religious devotees, and traders.

Evidence of these artists can be found in extant court tax records, as these musical performers shared their art as key participants in public and private religious court, temple, and private ceremonies, festivals, and processions (see fig. 2.1). Lansing claims this “radiation of ideas” as the subsequent “spread of a brilliant new cosmology, given different expression by different [religious] sects, but always containing a set of propositions about the relationship of the social sphere to the macrocosm.” He emphasizes that “to understand the success of this radiation, we must look to the power of the ideas themselves, and not to accidents of their transmission.”

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In regard to Balinese dramatic performances, Lansing states,

> Such performances were perhaps the most significant instruments of “Indianization,” for it was through them . . . that Mount Meru [the realm of the gods] came to be transplanted to village shrines, and an Indic worldview based on written texts came to be shared by ordinary villagers, few of whom presumably read Sanskrit. … The heroes, the gods, the priests—the entire procession—did indeed reach Bali, but it did so through the arts and the imagination. … It is quite possible, even likely, that not a single Indian visited Bali between the fifth and the fifteenth centuries; it is even more likely that no Balinese actually visited India. Indeed, the India that “Indianized” Bali to the India of Indra’s heaven, of Rama’s court of Ayudhya, of Mount Meru—could not be found by sailing across the Indian Ocean.\(^\text{14}\)

The second wave of Indian cultural migration was patronized by new monarchies in order to conspicuously bolster societal status and heighten the mystical powers of the ruler. Later interactions with traders from the Middle East, East Asia, and the West contributed to this process of localization as the Indonesian archipelago made subsequent societal adaptations that made Indonesia the diverse country it is today. Indonesia, and Java and Bali in particular, has therefore been no stranger to prolonged periods of foreign interaction, and over the years it has

\(^{14}\) Ibid.
developed a notable tolerance for and flexibility toward foreign art, commerce, and religion.\textsuperscript{15}

The integrity and force of the Javanese and Balinese worldview is preserved through the population’s ability to adapt its cultural artifacts in the face of political strife and social instability. Current practices in Javanese and Balinese performance art, in particular dance and drama with gamelan accompaniment, are evidence of these local adaptations of Indian tradition.

Figure 2.2. Musical performance using traditional Indian instruments and court dress, Borobudur, Central Java (c. late eighth or early ninth century). Photo courtesy of Kenneth Hall.

\textsuperscript{15} It is prudent to mention that the gamelan sound typically found on the island of Java is not the same as that found in Bali, another of the well-known islands, although some basic musical traits are similar between the two. Sumarsam, \textit{Javanese Gamelan and the West} (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 2.
Indonesian classical music is a highly refined and complex artistic medium in which the Javanese have preserved and cultivated the very essence of their cultural identity. Performance art that uses the Indonesian gamelan as its musical source serves as cultural evidence of this “Indianization” (see fig. 2.2 and 2.3). Karawitan is the term used to define Javanese classical music and is an integral component in this sense of cultural continuity. Since its introduction into common musical language in the early nineteenth century, karawitan has undergone considerable local modifications of what was historically associated with the intricate and highly refined arts of the Javanese and Balinese courts. Despite these adaptations, the court arts have remained purposely distinct from the traditional folk arts of the villages.\textsuperscript{16}

To this day, the word *karawitan* embodies the musical repertoire of the full-size Javanese gamelan as it is derived from “standardized” courtly artistic traditions and consistencies in performance practices that are reproduced in today’s Yogyakarta and Solo courts. This study provides introductory and contextual insight into the world of *karawitan* by addressing Javanese and Balinese musical traditions as these relate to the long-term transmission of *karawitan* musical tradition, training, and performance. To approach *karawitan* it is necessary to explore the philosophical and artistic traditions of interconnected gamelan music and accompanying dance and drama because they resulted from regional “Indianization,” and they syncretized the Javanese-Hindu worldview.

**Gamelan Historical Context and Early Indian Ocean Cultural and Religious Interactions**

In the attempt to rediscover and recreate the Javanese and Balinese gamelan music and dance of the past, one needs to begin by addressing the development of early Eastern Indian Ocean civilizations. From the very beginning, the movement and transmission of ideas was not the result of conquest or Indic colonization, and no evidence currently exists that verifies the presence of direct Indian political control. Early Indian cultural and religious interactions by Indian Brahmans and Buddhist monks, maritime diaspora, princes, merchants, and traders with Southeast Asians all generated ripples that fueled popular acceptance and local reproduction rather than the large-scale movement of people from South to Southeast Asia.

**Numbers of negara** (Indic kingdoms) existed between the third and thirteenth centuries C.E. throughout Southeast Asia, notably in Burma, Cambodia, Thailand, southern and central Vietnam, Sumatra, and Java. These diverse collections of Southeast Asian civilizations are defined by their voluntary adoption of Indic models of social and religious behavior and divine
kingship. The “Indianization” process in Southeast Asia was not immediate but a delicate process in which the spread of individuals (such as monks and traders), the conversion of rulers, and subsequent royal patronage occurred hundreds of times throughout many generations. Indian style was at first carefully reproduced but over time developed an increasingly indigenous flavor.\(^{17}\)

The highly respected and greatly admired Javanese court culture from ancient to modern times has been a major factor in the propagation, modification, and dissemination of gamelan music and other artistic performance practices in Java. The Javanese kraton (“the residence of the monarch”) housed a diverse entourage of artists and musicians and served as a cultural hub in which regional styles were shared, adopted, and refined. Reputable musicians from villages and provinces beyond the boundaries of a ruler’s kingdom were regularly summoned to work in these new capital cities.\(^ {18}\)

By the eighth century, Indian civilization was localized as foundational to the development of court centers in Central Java and subsequent east Java monarchies that would follow from the eleventh through fifteenth centuries. The “Sanskritization” of society (a term that can be used interchangeably with “Indianization” in this regard) ran parallel to the localization of music and was gradually indigenized by the spread of musical ideas and popular appreciation of stylistic tendencies rather than by oppressive Indian agents. According to Sheldon Pollack, from the seventh century to the pre-1500 decline of the Majapahit era, kraton rulers and leaders

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enacted new means of social and political order and validated their own royal identification by adapting to newly emerging trends in cosmopolitan Sanskrit culture.\textsuperscript{19}

“Sanskritized” literature and language brought new ways of perceiving the political and royal domain and prescribed unique concepts of cultural space in strategically vernacularized settings. The localization of Indic models of societal structure and literary mediums in which to evince deep learning was a strategic choice that resulted from the local acknowledgement of Java’s important position on the India-to-China international trade route. In an important age of commercial opportunity, “Sanskritization” ultimately made the country more attractive to foreign investors. It also established foundation for a variety of cultural and economic transactions between South and Southeast Asians.

The “Sanskritization” of Javanese society incorporated sophisticated cultural elements and “higher” art forms, such as court gamelan music and dance, and was a legitimizing force, propagated by internal elite and indigenous rulers who patronized scholars and artists.\textsuperscript{20} Balinese rulers and nobles were similar in this regard and desired to restructure their society to further assimilate theories of state and Indian artistic and structural cosmological philosophies.\textsuperscript{21}

In Java, the patrons of the arts, members of what is known as the priyaji, or court-associated aristocratic class, began to show a particular preference for specific art forms among the vast body of regional styles and performance practices. These patrons in Java included both foreign and native aristocrats who consolidated particular regional styles into one entity, which

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Sheldon Pollock, \textit{The Language of the Gods in the World of Men; Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 28.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Lansing, 417.
\end{itemize}
later became known as the “new art,” a sort of Javanese culture par excellence that aimed to cultivate and preserve Javanese cultural traditions and artistic practices that were, in effect, a mix of local and Indian tradition.

Ironically, in the kraton's quest for new artistic expressions and ideas borrowed from popular domestic, regional, and foreign sources, this ‘new art’ was eventually refined and materialized into its own static tradition in the twentieth century. Court art in the pre-colonial age was dispersed throughout Java by connoisseurs of the arts, the joining of potentially rival courts through marriage, and by popular appreciation among music amateurs and professionals. The ‘new art’ did not reach its present form until the latter decades of the nineteenth century (1870s), due to an infusion of new wealth into the Javanese courts consequent to the renewal of the court-based Javanese batik textile industry.\(^\text{22}\)

One negative consequence of this increase in wealth was the stagnation of the arts. The “revitalized courts” patronized traditional cultural forms (including gamelan musical tradition) as a means to reinforce their historical claims to political and cultural priyaji elite stature. A Dutch anthropologist would subsequently define this in retrospect as an “involution” rather than an evolution of Javanese and Balinese society and culture.\(^\text{23}\)

**Indic Influences in Indonesian Wayang Theatre and Dance Drama**

The Indonesian proclivity for Indic stories of mystical and spiritual origin was initially influenced by Indian brahman and bhiksu migrants who helped generate and disseminate the


spread of Hinduism and Buddhism among receptive local rulers. Religious practitioners who came by sea were encouraged to come to Java to serve as consultants to emerging court-based royalty. Hindu and Buddhist culture had appeal in regions already predisposed to religious beliefs rooted in the veneration of ancestors, the manifest power of natural phenomena, and spirit worship. The new and old Hindu and Buddhist temples that dot the Javanese landscape preserve this fusion of Javanese and Hindu/Buddhist religious and cultural philosophy (see fig. 2.4).

Figure 2.4. Earliest Hindu temple complex in Java: eighth-century Dieng Plateau. Photo courtesy of Kenneth Hall.

Like the temple iconography in Bali and Java, musical and literary traditions that originated in the Hindu-Buddhist era to the sixteenth century remained relatively unaltered as well, based in the mix of the Sanskrit language, Hindu epics, and old Javanese language romances such as *kekawin*. The ingrained presence of the indigenous *Panji* (Hindu) and *Ménak*

(Islamic) post-1500 literary cycles and earlier *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* Javanese versions of the Indian epics in shadow puppet theatre and dance and drama serve as evidence of this sustained religious consciousness.\(^{25}\)

Live *wayang kulit* (shadow-puppet theatre) performance, for example, evolved as an ideal representation of syncretic religious and literary practices adopted by the Javanese from Hindu cultural traditions. Within these performances, music, drama, song, and choreography are combined into one single event. These artistic events employ delicately carved and painted puppets made of flattened leather, the puppeteer (*dhalang*, who functions as the storyteller and musical conductor), and the gamelan. The puppeteer manipulates the arms of the puppets with sticks and acts out stories from behind a lit screen. There is a very intricate and philosophical basis to the speech in *wayang kulit*, and the performance incorporates highly sophisticated phrasing and allusions in the Old Javanese language. Syncretized Hindu, Javanese, and Balinese religious philosophy forms the basis of each story, but secular theatrical forms are also possible. The audience can view the performance from both sides of the screen, which metaphorically represents the light and dark sides of reality in Hindu dualistic ideology.\(^{26}\)

The large number of deities and special characters that define the *wayang kulit* puppet theatre stories are generally of Hindu-Buddhist origin and use Sanskritic names. The functions of each deity, however, have been adapted by the Javanese to suit their own religious preferences and goals. For example, *Dew Sri*, originally the wife of the significant Hindu divine *Vishnu*,


serves as the fertility and rice goddess of Java. Bathara Kal, the Javanese god of death and destruction, was originally associated with the notion of time (kāla) in Hindu culture.

Despite using similar poetical and musical material, wayang kulit performance differs from wayang orang [“people”] in that the latter incorporates live, costumed actors in the place of puppets. The choreography cannot comfortably accommodate the sheer complexity of speech but makes up for these poetic voids by incorporating clear, fast-paced, and visually intriguing movements. These movements allow for easier comprehension of the story, and the costuming similarly reflects the costumes worn in Indian dance.

There are conventions that must remain in place for vocal expressions, facial expressions, movements, and gestures. Subtle variation in the portrayal of a character is allowed, but the overall preservation of the dance style distinguishes Indonesian dance from other moving art forms. This factor also explains why dancers or actors specialize in roles that suit their physical appearance. In Bali, for example, the dance-dramas are a closely related amalgamation of choreography and formal gesture that base their specific movements on musical cues from the gamelan. The metrical form and phrase structure that delineates these actions is absolutely precise and measured to perfection with a cyclical nature that is indicative of the Hindu melodic and rhythmic representation of the cosmos. The story can be sung, pantomimed, or acted out against a musical background. The iconic postures and hand positions presented by these skilled dancers represent an artistic tradition of performance and visual art that has been passed down since at least the ninth century. These stylized postures can be viewed in the stone reliefs of religious monuments throughout Bali.27

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27 McPhee, 16.
Musicians and dancers have traditionally performed dance and puppet theatre in evening performances that begin in the late afternoon and continue throughout the night. The audience is generally familiar with the plot, and the intrigue lies in the manner in which the mythical world is evoked through the artistry of voice, dance, costuming, improvisation, and more. Audiences may not know what story or segment of an epic tale is being told for hours due to this stylized performance.28

The literary materials that form the plot of these performances stem from well-known Indic myths such as the Mahabharata and Ramayana epics. These texts were originally in Sanskrit but later were adapted into localized aesthetic objects by Indonesian courts. The vernacularization of a vast body of Sanskrit narratives into the Old Javanese language was a process that aggressively began in the eleventh century in the courts of east Java (Kadiiri, Singhasari, Majapahit) and progressed for the next four to five centuries. Called kakawin, this poetic genre was introduced by the Javanese in the ninth century and is composed of lexical items that are closely adapted from their Sanskrit original.29 These poems represent an India that has been metaphorically transferred to Java and they strive to generate a sense of Javanese cultural identity among their audiences through underlying commentary on familiar political and cultural images and ideologies.

In his study of epistemology and aesthetics in Javanese shadow-puppet theater, Alton Becker expands upon the individual role of the artist in the adaptation, assimilation, and

28 Ibid., 17.

expansion of foreign art forms. In regard to Javanese mythology in shadow-puppet theater, he states,

One of the most important differences between traditional artistic expression and modern individualistic artistic expression is that in a traditional medium the artist is consciously expanding a prior text, an open corpus of literature, art, or music, whereas an artist whose intent is self-expression creates and develops his own text, his own mythology, so far as he can and still communicate. When an artist can no longer work within the inherited mythology and plot constraints, he seeks new mythology and constraints, often from his own imagination, and he works in alienation from his own society.\(^\text{30}\)

The complex musical agreements that resulted from the “Sanskritization” of Java and Bali extend far beyond the literary context of shadow puppet theatre and dance drama and can be found in the music itself. The performances of the Javanese and Balinese gamelans bear close resemblance to musical traditions and performance practices that still exist in southern India. Karnāṭīc music from the borderland between North and South Indian cultural traditions is associated with the wider classical tradition of South India rather than the North.\(^\text{31}\) In particular, composer Purandara Dāsa (Sṛinīvāsa Nāik, 1484-1564), known as the “father of Karnāṭīc music,” settled in the capital city of Vijayanagara shortly before the empire’s fall to northern Muslim invaders.\(^\text{32}\) Purandara Dāsa and his predecessors were advocates of a devotional musical genre associated with South Indian Hindu Bhakti devotionalism, which focused on the worship of Viṣṇu and Śiva. The Bhakti movement gained favor in Southern India in the seventh to tenth


\(^{\text{31}}\) Karnāṭīc music emphasizes music for the voice and features complex rhythmic and melodic styles. These styles can be expressed through quasi-improvisatory instrumental and vocal sliding and ornamentation that follows a structured sequence of pitches (ṣruti) and rhythmic cycles (tala).

centuries. Because of its emphasis on rhythm and the voice, the music was easily understood, assimilated, reproduced, and popularized by the wider public and not dependent upon the patronage of royal supporters or members of the Hindu caste elite. This music commonly appeared at village ceremonies called *bhajanas* and was also widely sung in the home. Performers of *Bhatki* music and stories regularly entertained religious pilgrims who made periodic journeys to sacred religious sites and otherwise shared their itinerant music, dance, and puppetry among various rural and urban sites throughout Southern India.\(^{33}\)

Historians assert that South India-based Muslim merchants brought this music to Southeast Asia post-1500 via the Indian Ocean maritime trade routes, as they inspired the development of *wayang merak* and *wayang golek*, three-dimensional wooden rod puppets that, as previously mentioned, were manipulated by a Javanese or Balinese puppeteer (*dhalang*) who usually sat behind a table, hiding himself from the spectators and animating his puppets by moving rods connected to the puppets’ hands and heads. Because of the greater simplicity of these new syncretic Javanese literary tales, and South Indian popular literary adoptions, these new puppet and dance performances readily integrated with Javanese and Balinese musical traditions and were performed in courts as well as in villages.\(^{34}\)

**Cardinal Directions and the Cosmos**

The Indic emphasis on time and location provides a clear model of social and political order that Javanese and Balinese rulers found attractive in order to justify royal authority. In

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\(^{33}\) Ibid., 26. The singing of devotional hymns was an integral component in *Bhatki* temple rituals and is characterized by its emphasis on the voice through melodic simplicity, limited ornamentation, and steady rhythmic declamation of the text.

Indian-inspired music and drama, Javanese and Balinese performances are carefully aligned with a particular time of day and indicate a connection with the Indian calendrical systems. This structure of what Lansing describes as “time reckoning” and “sacred geometry” are represented both physically and metaphorically in gamelan performance in early Hindu and Buddhist temple reliefs, and as a continuum in Balinese temple festival and “holy day” cycles that dictated performance times and locations of particular gamelan pieces or theatrical and dance dramas.

This cosmological system symbolically placed the monarch at the center of the universe, a position analogous to the supreme god, who is the universal instigator of social and political order. From the musical perspective, the drum leader in the center of the gamelan ensemble (as described above) is directly symbolic of this hierarchical system and directs the choice of tempi and structure of predetermined musical attitudes in individual instruments. Balinese gamelan, *gamelan gong kebyar*, is especially noted for its aggressive tempo. *Kebyar*, “the process of flowering,” refers to the explosive changes in tempo and dynamics characteristic of Balinese gamelan.

In performance, the physical arrangement of the instruments of the gamelan reflects the Indonesian preoccupation with cardinal directions. The strategic placement of the instruments creates sharp right angles to ease shifting back and forth between *pélog* and *sléndro* instruments in a performance, and directs the flow of musical energy towards spiritually charged locations. The spatial orientation of the gamelan therefore provides meaning and significance both spiritually and symbolically. For the Balinese, diagrams depicting north, south, east, and west relate location with the different personalities of the Absolute God known as Sangyang Tunggul.

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Each of the four cardinal directions reflects different personalities of this Indic god, coincidentally Brahma, Visṇu, Siva, and the female divine, Mahadewa. (see fig. 2.5).36

Figure 2.5. Diagram depicting the four regional directions are associated with the four major Hindu divinities: *Visṇu/Wisna* (north); *Brahma* (south); *Mahadevi/Mahadewa* the inclusive Divine Goddess (west) but normally conceived as the consort of *Siva*; and *Siva/Iswara* (east). The critical “base” is the empowered and empowering location of “north,” from which the other directions derive.

As the Absolute God moves in a particular direction, he is said to take on the personality of that location. For instance, as *Sangyang Tunggul* moves to the north, he inherently becomes *Visṇu/Wisna* and adopts this personality. The gods themselves do not reside in some foreign

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36 Ibid., 55. Reproduced by Ball State University.
location in the sky but are said to blow like the wind across the island of Bali, until they settle in one particular location on any given day. The gods travel without personality until they arrive at any of the four potential directional locations. The cardinal directions provide personality to the Divine, but a personality can be altered from one temple performance site to another to the benefit of the local population. In Balinese tradition the Divine has good and bad days, wherein humans need to avoid the Divine on these bad days—or neutralize the Divine through participation in temple rituals and accompanying dramatic and musical performances.

The most prestigious seat for the Divine in Bali is at the top of the highest volcanic mountain in the proclaimed center of the island, called Ganung Agung. This mountain, which has periodically erupted in the past, determines what it means to be north and south or Kaja and Kelod. Bali is composed of several regularly active volcanoes, with Ganung Agung at the center of the island, as the mountain regions collectively create a dramatic slope downwards to the sea. Thus, when a Balinese is claiming that a particular location is “north,” he is actually meaning that the location is Kaja or mountainwards (higher). If he says “south,” he is referring to a location that is seawards (lower). Ultimately, a Balinese will always keep a multi-dimensional map of the spiritually empowered Balinese world in his head, as knowing where one is relative to the potential of a personal confrontation with an out-of sorts Divine in the real-world domain of Bali is to be avoided.37

This map is limited by both spiritual and hierarchical factors. As explained by Stephen Lansing,

37 Lansing, 97.
Transitions from place to place on the grid are dangerous. Thus when a soul returns from one of the regions of heaven and is reborn as an infant in the family, very elaborate purification ceremonies are required to render the transition harmless. Similarly, death requires ceremonies to protect the soul during this journey. In fact, every transition from place to place on this grid is potentially dangerous. Through the grid also blow the gods, “like the wind.” … it is their relative position which defines their character. The Balinese basically regard the universe as hostile and malignant, so one must be very careful about steering the proper path through it. Bali is not Paradise to the Balinese.38

The notion of hierarchy and directional awareness is thus acknowledged spiritually and socially in Balinese and Javanese culture. Consistent with the local conception of space and place, the spatial orientation of the gamelan orchestra must be consistent with the time and place of its performance. Similar to local temples, orchestral spatial awareness is absolutely crucial to understanding the symbolic and spiritual significance of instrument placements as these relate to daily ritual space. In Bali, the mountainwards and seawards dichotomy is reflected in the importance of the drum leader at the center of the performance space, and instrument placement is accordingly relative to the spiritual “full-time” and “empty-time” periods of their performance.

The precise location of the gamelan in performance space is thus important for a community’s spiritual continuity. The gamelan orchestra has symbolic significance in its placement in a temple looking toward Kaja (mountainwards) to musically accompany the arrival of the gods and their subsequent behaviors in the temple complex. For example, in Taman, Bali, in the temple for the God of Gunung, observe the proper placement of the gamelan’s location in the upper left corner as this is on the north-south axis looking to the north (see fig. 2.5).

38 Ibid., 3-4.
Social status is an important aspect of Indonesian culture, and its influences can be traced through aural and visual art, language, and architecture. Java in particular developed as a society based on a distinct system of status hierarchies. Gamelan musicians, who come from many levels of society, hold a hierarchical status in the ensemble. This stature can be immediately seen as musicians take their places in preparation for a gamelan performance. Those of lower social status walk to their instruments half bent over. If there are no instrument assignments provided at the time of performance, these “lesser” musicians will take their place next to the less

[39] Ibid., 55. Reproduced by Ball State University.
distinguished instruments, such as the *kethuk* and *kempyang*, which lack prominence in the ensemble.⁴⁰

These hierarchal extremes are also portrayed by the puppets of *wayang* theater. For example, in the *wayang* theatre good characters enter from stage right, and evil characters enter from stage left. Like the orchestra, actors portraying characters of lower status will lower themselves when passing performers or characters who are older or have a higher status. The performer’s voice will also drop to a monotone level, and they will make minimal arm and hand gestures consistent with the character they portray or their personal stature relative to stage performer hierarchy.

**Rasa and Musical Performance**

The concept of *rasa* in gamelan religious philosophy extends far beyond feeling or mood in the production of music making. *Rasa* is a Sanskrit term, originating from Indian Tantrism, with a definition that is further complicated by the Javanese reinterpretation of its meaning through the lens of *kabatinian* mysticism, animism, and perhaps Sufi Islam. *Rasa* is often difficult to understand among those trained in the Western tradition who are unaccustomed to notions of the separation of the body and mind. Some scholars describe the Indonesian sense of *rasa* as a means by which to achieve enlightenment or a higher sense of self. Others say it is experiencing spiritual enlightenment itself.⁴¹ As scholar Paul Strange interprets,
The special potency of the concept of *rasa* stems in part from the spectrum of meanings attached to it. Because *rasa* links the physical sense of taste and touch to the emotions, the refined feeling of the heart, and the deepest mystical apprehension of the ultimate, it provides a continuum which links surface meanings to which anyone can relate to inner levels of experience which normally, at least without our context, appear discontinuous.\(^{42}\)

To the Javanese, *rasa* is only reached through intense focus, the emptying of the mind, and letting go of emotions and attachments to the body and perceptions of self. Through pre-performance ascetic acts that involve physical and mental preparation, the musician/performer can likewise be filled, or entered, by a divine force like a vessel, therein creating a channel through which musical energy can flow that will empower the performance. From a Western perspective, this concept is related to a musician letting go of fears and anxieties, trusting in preparation and musical ability, and allowing the music or dramatic performance to unfold in live performance. The late dance specialist G.B.P.H. Suryobrongto believed that Javanese dance required the dancer to “abandon the usual personal awareness and perform in a state of total concentration, which is virtually a state of ecstasy,” in order to fully embody the spirit and character of a dancer’s role.\(^{43}\) Other music traditions call this experience “the zone,” wherein performers must have reached a high level of musical or dramatic comprehension and personal awareness in the form of confidence in and acceptance of their own ability.

In the context of gamelan performance, a piece of music is not to be judged according to standardized conventions and expectations of melodic production or phrasing, but by how ‘*rasa*-full’ the performance was. The Javanese and Balinese believe that “the gradual merging of the mind and the body through knowledge gained from contemplation is the main point of musical


Therefore, the Javanese artist must let go of the ego, particularly the internal preoccupations of the body and mind, to be truly filled with the essence of the music. It is as if the performer is an outside observer rather than an engaged participant.

When an individual is not fully prepared, ability to experience rasa is impaired because the musician can only channel his energies into the coordination and production of accurate pitches and rhythms rather than focus on channeling spiritual purpose. The personal endeavor to fully embody the medium in which organized sound can be created is to both achieve and subsequently express rasa. Ultimately, “without this dynamic, synergistic relationship between the body and that which fills it, it seems a Javanese performance cannot be considered effective or good.”

Strive to understand the wisdom contained in the gendhing, be diligent in feeling [ngrasakké] its rhythm [irama], its development and treatment; feel [ngrasakna] the essence of the melody [lagu], know where lies the origin of pathet feel [rarasen] it until your soul is made clear, bright, and your view unclouded – a clarity that penetrates the universe.

This poem, composed by gamelan music theorist Martopangrawit outlines the essential components of gamelan ideology as it is physically and spiritually expressed within the minds and bodies of Indonesian musicians. The drive to understand gamelan composition is directly

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45 Weiss, 41.

correlated to the drive to contemplate and gain awareness of the essence of the Indonesian-Hindu
syncretistic worldview. Society, as it is structured according to pre-established hierarchies to
generate social order, is fully personified and realized in both the performance and conception of
gamelan music and wayang theatre. Without the hierarchical representation of instruments and
their roles in the larger gamelan orchestra, the mathematical precision expressed in the rhythmic
design of colotomic patterns, the specially derived performance traditions that neatly layer and
interlock within one another, the standardized personalities of particular characters in wayang
theatre, and the ascetic practice required to interpret and articulate the music itself … musical
chaos would exist. The gamelan is therefore a synergistic cosmological model composed of
many diverse metaphorical entities, unified as one to reflect the carefully regulated balance
between order and chaos as represented by the Indic-Hindu worldview that arrived in the early
pre-Majapahit Indonesian era.

Complex fusions from varied artistic and religious sources have set the foundation for
new representations of gamelan music by Indonesians and foreigners. Enchanted by the sights
and sounds of the gamelan, Western composers, Americans in particular, have adapted gamelan
techniques, styles, and instruments to suit their own perspectives and attitudes towards music. As
evident in the following chapter, the *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan* by composer
Bill Alves is a fascinating example of these cross-cultural assimilations.
Chapter 3

Bill Alves: *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan*

**Introduction**

Bill Alves’s *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan* has effectively combined the instruments and musical styles of the East and West and is a valuable addition to a growing body of harp repertoire influenced by non-Western cultures. This unprecedented work is the first known piece in the history of the gamelan tradition to have combined the Western pedal harp with instruments of the Indonesian gamelan. Since the nineteenth century, composers have attempted to combine several Western instruments with the full gamelan, yet none have employed the formal structure of a Western concerto, with a modern pedal harp as the soloist, with the gamelan.

The concerto consists of four untitled movements. When the piece was first rehearsed and premiered in 2004, Alves labeled the movements “Introduction,” “I,” “II,” and “III.” This labeling was quite confusing in rehearsal and he later renamed and numbered the movements “I,” “II,” “III,” and “IV.” This latter labeling will be used in my analysis of individual movements.

Many instruments common to the gamelan, such as drums, zithers, and wooden flutes, are not represented because either they are not called for in the orchestration or they are tuned to the sléndro scale. The *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan* is written for instruments tuned in the pélog scale. The ensemble used in this concerto includes a total of five metallophones (*saron, slenthem, demung*, and two *gender*), three tuned hanging *kempul*, one
hanging gong ageng, which is the largest, and three sets of kettle instruments (kenong, bonang panerus, and bonang barung). 

The instrumental parts in this concerto resemble layers of stratified rock, each with its own distinctive musical color, pattern, and shape, that visually and aurally stack on top of one another. The stratification of instrumental motives and rhythms into distinguishable and cyclical linear patterns is highly characteristic of Javanese gamelan compositions. The Javanese advocate that every instrument is equal in the sense that each has an individual part that should not predominate dynamically. In this concerto, Alves maintains this balanced tradition in the gamelan parts but breaks from common Javanese gamelan musical practices by adding the harp part as a soloist.

In particular, I evaluate the organization and combination of pitches (laras) in this concerto and the manner in which individual instrumental lines and motives interact, cycle, and combine. Laras can be roughly understood as either individual pitch members in the pélog or sléndro scales (Ma, Lu, Ro, etc.) or as the names of full scales such as lara sléndro or lara pélog. Alves employs particular laras subsets in order to delineate various modes (pathet) that are currently found in Javanese gamelan musical practices.

For this chapter, in order to provide a basic understanding of the pélog scale, its representative pitches in cipher notation (kepatihan), the Javanese short name, and the pitch references used in both the performance and analysis are outlined as follows:

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47 The saron and demung parts are not in the original score because some instruments arrived later than others from Java at the time of composition. Alves later added parts to the concerto but has not yet added all instruments to the full score.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cipher notation</th>
<th>Javanese short name</th>
<th>Western pitch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ji</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ro</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>lu</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>pat</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>ma</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>nem</td>
<td>B-flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>pi</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1. The pélog and Western pitch relationships employed in the Earlham College and Ball State University performances of the *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan*.48

My analysis is linear, and just as in this hybridized piece, applies the musical terminology of two musical traditions (Western Classical and karawitan). To clarify, the harmony, vertical structure and hierarchical relationships to tonic or dominant are not discussed, yet large formal structures and the interaction and repeated presence of particular pitches and the layering of musical lines are investigated. In order to illustrate this complex musical relationship between the East and the West, following a discussion of the background and stylistic traits of the composer, I examine a selection of brief musical excerpts in order to demonstrate the concerto’s non through-composed formal structure as well as to highlight linear phrases, motives, and rhythms that exhibit or allude to non-Western musical influences.

**Bill Alves’s Background**

Bill Alves was born in 1960 and, at the time of this writing, teaches music composition at Harvey Mudd College in Southern California. He composes for electronic media as well as non-Western instruments and directs the college’s American Gamelan Ensemble. He began his musical career as a harpsichord player and was charged with the time-consuming task of

48 My tuning decision-making process is discussed in detail in Chapter 6 and pitch correlations are further defined in Appendix B: Pitch and Tuning Correlations. In particular, the discrepancies between G or G-sharp (*pat*) are shown.
regularly tuning the instrument. Over time he began to experiment with different tunings and eventually decided to devote his musical career to composition and exploring the possibilities of alternative tunings in various instruments. This interest led him to the discovery of both the gamelan and the American composer Lou Harrison, who was already invested in similar musical endeavors. As a graduate student at the University of Southern California (USC), Alves was part of a music program that regularly brought high-level players and lecturers, such as John Cage, Pierre Boulez, Luciano Berio, and John Adams, to give demonstrations and master classes. Upon Alves’s request, around 1985, the USC music department arranged a visit, and subsequently a residency, for Lou Harrison. Harrison gave lectures to the World Music classes, met with student composers, and also helped Alves with many of his original compositions. Additionally, Harrison had built many instruments inspired by world music traditions that used Western tunings (such as the American gamelan, “Old Granddad”). The Harvey Mudd College gamelan in Claremont, California, is a direct reflection of this ingenuity and was commissioned by Alves to be built in Java and tuned using just intonation.

Alves and Harrison continued to correspond over the years and this collaboration greatly influenced Alves’s musical style and philosophy on Western music inspired by gamelan music traditions. According to Alves, Harrison had visited various places in Asia and Southeast Asia and had significant experiences that influenced his understanding of gamelan music. Harrison’s diligent practice and study of Indonesian gamelan instruments, tuning, notation, and musical style throughout his lifetime led to compositions that could be understood and replicated by traditionally trained Javanese performers. Harrison provided Alves a model by which to conceptualize how musical parts inspired by non-Western musical traditions could effectively come together. For instance, Harrison wrote many of his works using compositional methods one
would use for percussion ensemble works. Alves was similar in his own rhythmic and linear musical methodology, and he layered instrumental lines and rhythmic motives on top of one another in his own compositions. To describe his musical style and philosophy, Alves writes,

My own aesthetic inclinations, as well as my inexperience with composing traditional Indonesian music, led me towards a middle path. The influences of Javanese and Balinese cultures and music on my own composing are undeniable, but no one would mistake my composition for something traditional. I agree with Steve Reich's statement that one should imitate the *structures*, not the *sounds*, of non-Western music, though I think he meant the word "structures" in the most general sense. In other words, bring to your own composition the spirit behind the music that influences you, not just a shallow imitation of the sounds.\(^{49}\)

In an interview, Alves verbally acknowledged that as a composer of Western classical music inspired by Balinese and Javanese performance practices and compositional styles, one must confront the idea that these cultures have lived with their own musical traditions for centuries. It is important to respect their musical forms and idioms and not to copy or pass off work as distinctly Javanese or Balinese. A composer or performer must learn from what the Javanese are doing and then determine where he or she will be on the spectrum of either paying little attention to gamelan tradition or trying to fully replicate the sound. Individually, Alves considers himself as more in the middle of this spectrum.\(^{50}\)

**Composing and Premiering the *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan***

The *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan* was first premiered and performed on May 9, 2004, at Harvey Mudd College, in Claremont, California, as part of the Microfest concert series that Alves founded. These concerts feature new-music compositions as well as world-

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\(^{50}\) Bill Alves, interview by author, Harvey Mudd College, Claremont, California, April 2015.
music compositions. Harpist Mary Dropkin played the premiere, and at the time of the performance, was an adjunct professor at Harvey Mudd College.\textsuperscript{51} Originally, this piece was written for the Harvey Mudd College gamelan, which was commissioned by Alves and constructed in Java where it was specially tuned by the maker to reflect a scale with just intonation. This type of tuning is not common in Java but allowed Alves the opportunity to create works that could be more easily blended with the Western scale. The harp was specifically chosen because of its ability to reproduce arbitrary tunings and for the composer’s appreciation of the harp’s “bell-like” qualities and “shimmery” timbre when combined with the gamelan orchestra.\textsuperscript{52}

The inspiration for some of these movements was a direct result of Alves’s experimentation with tunings in the past, and the movements had existed in other forms. For example, in 1998, Alves wrote a piece for piano and Balinese gamelan and purposely retuned the piano to match the tuning of the Balinese scales. In the case of a traditional Javanese gamelan, a direct replication of the tuning results in slightly detuned octaves. Unequal octaves create a “sparkle” in the timbre of the gamelan that is greatly admired by the Javanese. In contrast, the Balinese gamelan has a much more pronounced frequency range between both pitches and individual instruments than the Javanese, especially in unequal tuning of the octaves.

Alves decided upon a pitch combination that ranged between a pure octave and a Balinese octave in the piano concerto. The central octave remained in tune, but as the piano keys extend outwards from the center, there was a greater compromise. According to Alves, the

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\textsuperscript{51} The concerto was recorded before the concert and was later rerecorded with guitar. The guitarist, John Schneider, specializes in pieces with alternative tunings and requested that Alves transcribe the concerto from harp to guitar. This particular transcription of the concerto can now be found on his album “Por Gitaro: Suites for Tuned Guitar.”

\textsuperscript{52} Alves, interview.
timbre of the *gender* and *slenthen* instruments is pure, somewhat similar to a sine wave, which means that combining instruments that are detuned is not very objectionable. However, with an instrument that has a great number of harmonics, such as the harp, the same detuning will sound objectionable. This explains why a compromise was necessary when tuning the solo piano or harp to the gamelan.

The structure of each movement is determined by the application of different subsets of the *pélog* scale (*pélog pathet bem* and *pélog pathet barang*) combined with striking moments of textural and dynamic contrast in musical and rhythmical density. According to the composer, he chose the *pélog* scale for practical reasons as well as for variety. It is much easier to compose variations from combinations and subsets of the seven pitches that define *pélog* rather than the five pitches that define *sléndro*. Alves also emphasized that his decisions in orchestration were to ensure efficiency. For instance, if the orchestration solely employs the *pélog* portion of the gamelan instruments only half of the heavy instruments will require transport. Thus, the instrumentation of this concerto was determined by the availability of instruments, and the efficiency of moving the gamelan from place to place, and most importantly, compositional variety.

I performed the concerto in 2015 at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, and at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, using a traditionally-tuned Javanese gamelan. The Earlham College gamelan was tuned by a maker in Java and did not match the frequencies used by Alves with the justly-tuned Harvey Mudd College gamelan.\(^{53}\) The pitches and frequencies of the Earlham gamelan required that the harp tuning be adapted in order to recreate the harp

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\(^{53}\) The Harvey Mudd College gamelan is called an “American gamelan.” An American gamelan can refer to 1) a gamelan built out of non-traditional materials such as aluminum trash cans, 2) a gamelan tuned to a different scale, or 3) a gamelan for which a piece is written by an American composer.
concerto on a non-American gamelan. This would best preserve Alves’s original contour and tuning with the instruments that were available.

**Analysis of Individual Movements of Alves’s *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan***

**Movement I**

The frequent time-signature changes in this harp-focused movement elicit a fantasia-like quality because the music sounds both free and improvisatory. There are three stylistic sections to the harp part. The first section is more structured and jarring with closely spaced three-note chords that descend into a low A-natural octave supported by ominous gong entrances on *Ma* (A-natural/5) and *Lu* (F-natural/3). The harp plays low left-hand octaves with the gong entrances, beginning in m. 2, then m. 5, m. 7, and m. 9. The combination of the low octaves in the harp bass wires with the gong is a deliberate timbral effect; the harp provides the initial front of attack to the pitch while the deep resonance of the gong both enhances and sustains the pitch (see fig. 3.2).

![Figure 3.2](image)

*Figure 3.2. Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan, “I,” mm. 1-7, gong, *kempul*, and harp combination.*

The next brief section starting at m.10 is increasingly more structured rhythmically and employs steady walking triplet patterns that cross bar lines in order to obscure any sense of metrical hierarchy. Despite its ethereal and distant quality, the harp melody is much more present in this section. The performer is exploring and providing a more structured, yet still free,
representation of the *pathet bem* mode.\(^{54}\) This mode is missing *Pi* (*C/7*) throughout the entire movement and the use of *Pat* (*G/4*) is avoided. The constant meter changes from 9/8 to 5/4, 5/8, 3/4, and so forth are responsible for this ambiguity, but the steady eighth-note pulse in the left hand holds the section together. This repetitive eighth-note pattern is characteristic of the cyclical nature of gamelan pieces, which aims to provide a means for mediation through the constant repetition of small or large motives and melodic figures (see fig. 3.3).

![Figure 3.3. Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan, “I,” mm. 9-12, steady and repetitive eighth-note motives in the harp part.](image)

Following the triplet patterns, there are three measures in 3/4 time of improvisatory figures and arpeggios that gradually travel down the full length of the harp, starting on *Ji* (*D/1*), then gliding downward to an abrupt halt on *Ma* with the *gong ageng* amplifying this arrival. At m. 34, the harp returns to a seemingly more structured, less melodically free character and reintroduces the closely spaced three-note chords that started the concerto but with added 5ths at the end for drama and contrast. The introductory movement comes to an inconclusive end while the gong still resonates on the *Ma* pitch center (see fig. 3.4).

Melodic or rhythmic motives from the movements that follow are not present in this introduction; however, the listener will be introduced to the gamelan’s tuning and the structural

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\(^{54}\) The distribution of *laras* that make up the *pathet bem* and *pathet barang* mode is clarified in Appendix A: Distribution of *Laras*. 
Ma pitch center. In a sense, this movement gently eases our ears into the pathet bem scale as well as reinforces the harp and gamelan tuning combination that characterizes the following movements.

![Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan, “I,” mm. 33-38, improvisatory arpeggio figures in the harp and the close of the movement on Ma.](image)

**Movement II**

The second movement is the longest in duration and requires the entire ensemble. The movement starts with a brisk tempo that draws a sharp contrast with the more lethargic and languid first movement. This movement was referred to by Alves in his earlier rehearsals as the first fast movement and was originally written for a recording commission of microtonal pieces. Before Alves had acquired the gamelan from Java, he had several of his own justly-tuned gender instruments and intended to write the piece for himself. He then hoped to overdub the instruments to create the illusion of multiple players. Later in the writing process Alves decided that the piece would function better in a work written for gamelan and a solo Western instrument. His great appreciation of the harp led him to choose this instrument as the concerto soloist.

Within this movement the most prominent gamelan features are: sélêh points (where disparate musical lines come together), modal shifts, and cyclical patterns in the harp.
Additionally, the movement reflects both Western classical ABA form with *gongan*-like sections throughout.\(^{55}\)

The eight-bar introductory statements in the *bonang panerus* 2 and *bonang barung* 1 are written one octave apart and set the stage by foreshadowing syncopated rhythmic patterns and sections that are to follow. The rhythmic patterns in the harp, as well as in all accompanying parts, are also highly syncopated and immediately distort any aural sense of a strong or weak beat. Because there is no drum leader, the *slenthem* takes on the role of timekeeper by providing the downbeats necessary to help delineate each measure or rhythmic pattern. According to Alves, the 5+3 rhythm in the *slenthem* in this movement comes from Balinese ritual music. The *bonang barung*, *bonang panerus*, *slenthem*, *kenong*, *saron*, and gong harmonically support the harp solo with their own single-bar melodic and rhythmic motives that repeat in a cyclical pattern. The pitches played by these instruments create the *pathet barang* scale.

At m. 5 the *bonang panerus* 2 begins a syncopated eighth-note and sixteenth-note pattern that transitions into the first introduction of the main theme at m. 9. In this solo section from mm. 5-8, *Lu* is dropped and the rare *Pat* enters, obscuring the *pathet barang* mode. Rehearsal letter A is the first *tutti* section in this concerto, all instruments entering on the downbeat. This includes the harp, which enters in octaves on *Pi* and marks the beginning of cyclical patterns in the accompanying instruments. All parts from mm. 9-14, minus the gong and *kempul* strike on *Pi*, employ a single-bar pattern that repeats a total of six times.

In m. 15 Alves creates tension by adding a brief two-measure bridge to halt the cyclical repetition, emphasizing the pedal *Ma*, which coincidently served as the pitch center from the first introductory movement. It is important to note that every time the harp and *gong ageng* or

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\(^{55}\) The ternary form of this movement is outlined as follows: Section A, mm. 1-34; Section B, mm. 35- 83; and the return to Section A mm. 84-126, beginning at letter K.
*kempul* play *Ma* on a downbeat, the musical result is a change of melodic character and musical density in the parts (see fig. 3.5). The Javanese do not conceptualize their music vertically except at certain structural points called *séléh* (‘settle’ or ‘come to rest’). These points of arrival signify the merging of independent musical lines on one particular note. In this circumstance, the appearance of the *Ma* pitch functions as this arrival point and is further emphasized by textural and structural changes in orchestration.⁵⁶

![Figure 3.5](image)

*Figure 3.5. Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan, “II,” mm. 21-23, excerpt demonstrating the strategic use of the *Ma* pitch center for formal changes in texture and structure.*

In m. 27, we reach a shift with an important return of *Lu* in all parts. All instruments except the harp and *bonang panerus* have shifted a major 3rd down from *Ma* to *Lu*. Contrary to the accompanimental instruments, the harp has shifted up a minor 6th higher from *Ma* to *Lu*,

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reaching its upper register and adding a brighter intensity with the expanded range to this theme.
The effect of the intervallic shift of the theme at m. 27 creates an aural sense of tension and
anticipation and serves as a transition towards a direct repeat of the introductory statement, now
in both the harp and bonang panerus 2 and bonang barung 1 parts at m. 31. Interestingly,
because the harp has the theme in both hands an octave apart, the harp is reinforcing the
accompanimental parts in the same register and increases the musical density of all parts. In the
character of Javanese gendhing (traditional gamelan composition), Alves has created musical
intensity and the appearance of a musical crescendo by combining all musical lines in unison, as
is frequently found in Western composition.

Figure 3.6. Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan, “II,” mm. 31-34, layering of parts in the
same octave in order to create dynamic intensity.

A greater change in mode than we have seen in all preceding sections in this movement
occurs in m. 35. In general, the laras in all instruments have reflected thebarang scale (pathet
barang mode) by incorporating pitches Ro, Lu, and sometimes Pat, Ma, Nem (Bb/6), and Pi.
There have been no appearances of Ji until m. 35, which first occurs in the lower register of the
harp. At this juncture in the piece, all pitches in the instruments reflect the \textit{pathet bem} mode. The \textit{lara Pi} that distinguishes the \textit{pathet barang} mode from the \textit{pathet bem} mode is dropped completely and only the pitches of the \textit{pélog pathet bem} scale are used: \textit{Ro}, \textit{Lu}, \textit{Pat} (rare), \textit{Ma}, and \textit{Nem}.\footnote{Pickvance describes the awkwardness that arises when discussing modulation in Javanese \textit{karawitan}, stating, “The term ‘modulation’ relates to the key system of Western music. Since key is absent from \textit{karawitan}, modulation is theoretically not possible. In practice there can be a strong suggestion of modulation, i.e., a move to a distinctly higher or lower register.” Pickvance, 33.}

In light of the repetitive accompanimental parts of this movement, the harp part provides another good example and representation of the cyclical nature of gamelan music. The goal of cyclical repetition in gamelan music is to halt any sense of motion or development of a particular melodic phrase or rhythmic idea. The listener is forced to remain in the moment, and the music begins to serve as a vehicle for contemplation and meditation. When a drum leader is present, he will normally use rhythmic cues to direct the ensemble into the next section or idea.

The two-measure phrase in the harp part seen in mm. 37-38 is repeated a total of eight times with small deviations from D to B-flat in the fifth repetition. The effect is similar to the Western ostinato that can generate forward momentum or halt musical progress. This excerpt is orchestrated in such a way that the harp retreats into the background and provides the accompanying instruments a chance to come forward as instrumental soloists presenting their own melodic and rhythmic motives.
Figure 3.7. *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan*, “II,” mm. 37-38, first appearance of the two-measure cyclical pattern in the harp.

Starting at m. 51, Alves has dropped the *slenthem*, *gong ageng*, and *kenong* parts, then moved the syncopated accompaniment in the *bonang barung 1* to the *bonang barung 2*. At this point in the visual performance, the audience will notice two players on the same instrument. Normally, only one player would be assigned to the *bonang panerus* but the composer has purposely created two individual parts. In the second movement, these parts have a series of repetitive interlocking and alternating patterns that provide the aural illusion of a single person playing running sixteenth notes. This pattern occurs over the course of four measures and then repeats itself. This method of orchestration (*imbal*) can be quite challenging to align rhythmically, but in music for the Javanese gamelan, it is common. Because of the faster nature of the second movement and in order to accommodate this complex rhythmic section, players must use a quick Balinese technique for dampening.
Figure 3.8. *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan*, “II,” mm. 52-54, interlocking rhythmic patterns (*imbal*).

Rehearsal letter I remains in the *pathet bem* mode but rejuvenates the listener with a new theme at m. 65 in the harp. The new material is short-lived, lasting for only eight measures, after which there is an exact repeat of the harp theme seen at m. 23 and m. 27. Together, the two sections of rehearsal J (mm. 73-76 and mm. 77-83) represent the third presentation of the theme first heard at m. 23 and m. 27 and generally follow the original *pathet bem* mode and intervallic structure. A *kempul* strike on Lu has been added to signal that we are transitioning out of the *pathet bem* mode that emphasized *Ji* (as seen through its continued presence on downbeats and in the *kempul*) and are making the gradual return to the *pathet barang* mode. Alves provides another presentation of the introductory statement of mm. 1-4, now rhythmically altered to bring the movement back into the main theme that initially characterized the first entrance of the harp and all instruments at m. 9.

This important arrival at rehearsal letter K brings the return of the main theme of the home mode, which under these circumstances is the *pathet barang* mode with an added *Pat*. This arrival is the return to the concluding A of the ABA form. The theme at K is a repeat of mm. 9-14 until m. 90, except the *bonang panerus 1*, *bonang panerus 2*, *bonang barung 1*, and *bonang barung 2* drop one octave lower and switch the *bonang barung 1* part to the *bonang barung 2* instead. Measure 98, despite using the same but ornamented material from m. 23 and m. 27, employs creative echoing canon-like techniques in combination with the theme in the harp. This
The ornamented harp theme begins on measure 97 but the two bonang parts begin two beats later, directly replicating the original unornamented melody seen at m.23 and m. 27 (see fig. 3.9).

Figure 3.9. Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan, “II,” mm. 96-99, shifted theme in bonang panerus 2 and bonang barung 2.

The offset pattern catches up with the harp in m. 101 by condensing the last two beats of the bonang and panerus parts and restarting at m. 102. At this moment in m. 102, the bonang panerus 2 and bonang barung 2 jump ahead with the theme so that it is now two beats ahead of the harp instead of two beats behind (see fig. 3.10).
The harp never catches up with the two *bonang panerus* 2 and *barung* 2 and instead jumps at rehearsal letter N into the ostinato-like arpeggio pattern that resembles m. 34 to m. 44, now a minor 3rd higher. The quasi-colotomic pattern structure in all parts begins in full force here at N (m. 106) with a two-measure cycle in the harp that repeats eight times from m. 106 to m. 122, a single-bar pattern in the *bonang barung* 1 that repeats sixteen times, and two-measure cycles in *bonang panerus* 2 that retain their rhythmic pattern but alter pitches.

In traditional Javanese gamelan music, every instrument has its own characteristic melodic and rhythmic style. Each player is expected to know these patterns and should be able to jump to any instrument at any time. In this concerto, these repetitive patterns in the orchestration reflect this understanding. The arrival at letter O in m. 114 adds more musical density by shifting the patterns from a basic eighth-note melody to dotted eight notes in the *bonang panerus* 2 part. This effect “fills in” the rhythmic gaps to create a strong sense of musical pulse and intensity as the movement pushes to the ending. The ending of this movement is marked by the return of the introductory figure that has made periodic entrances throughout with various rhythmic, melodic,
and orchestration changes. The introductory theme resembles a bookend for this movement and provides a subtle sense of symmetry, resolving with a final stroke on *Ma* in the *gong ageng*.

Movement III

Movement III is much softer and slower in character than the previous movement, and does not reflect a Western classical standard form. However, this movement has the most obvious and apparent instances of cyclical repetition (*gongan*) in the accompanying parts. The movement originated as a multi-movement concerto with piano and Balinese gamelan ensemble and was performed in 2001 at the California Institute of the Arts. The tempo drops to roughly sixty beats per minute, and the rhythms are less complex with the omission of syncopated melodies. In the beginning section the listener will become aware of a steady moving pulse in all parts. This movement gives the players a chance to demonstrate a softer playing style, but they remain in the background to accompany the harp melody.

The only exception to this accompanimental role is focused in the *gender barung* part. This instrument, as well as the *gender panerus*, is new to this movement and players are required to move from the *bonang barung* and *bonang panerus* to the *gender* between movements in performance. In comparison to the *bonang*, this metallophone has a fuzzier and warmer quality to its timbre. Next to the drums and *gambang*, it is one of the more complex gamelan instruments and is known as a member of the “front row” instruments.

The movement begins quietly with the *bonang panerus* and *bonang barung* and uses the *pathet barang* scale. The rare *Pat* found in the *pathet barang* scale is completely avoided for

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58 Every musical segment in this movement (except the sections at E and M) lasts a total of eight bars, and each is signaled at its start by the strike of the *gong ageng*. In traditional Javanese composition, the *gong ageng* is stuck on the final beat of a cycle or segment. Alves preserves the notion of traditional gamelan *gongan*, but is taking a Western classical front-end approach by placing the *gong ageng* at the beginning of each segment rather than the end.
sixty-six bars and makes its entrance at rehearsal letter H, m. 67. At the beginning of this movement, the *gender panerus*, *gender barung*, and *slenthem* enter at m. 5, the latter two with their own four-bar pattern, and the *gender panerus* with a single-bar pattern. The *gender panerus* continues this single-bar, three-pitch pattern (*Pi, Ma, and Nem*) for a total of twenty-eight cycles (*gongan*) to m. 32, while the *gender barung* and *slenthem* continue their own cycles until rehearsal letter B at m. 16 (see fig. 3.11).

![Figure 3.11. Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan, “III,” mm. 11-15, cyclical, single-bar pattern in *gender panerus.*](image)

The harp softly enters with a melody in octaves at rehearsal A at m. 10 and is reinforced with the first *gong ageng* strike on *Ma*. This sixteen-bar melody continues until rehearsal letter C, where it is then repeated. The use of sixteen measures for a melodic pattern closely follows the tradition of fixed forms in *karawitan* practices. Called *bentuk*, these fixed forms create colotomic structures and are characterized by a certain number of stokes or beats in punctuating instruments or by a particular pattern. The stroke of the *gong ageng* designates the close of the pattern and signals the repeat of the cycle. Alves is implying traditional *gongan* structure in this through the repeated sixteen-bar harp repetition.

The melody does not repeat a third time and instead retreats into the background at rehearsal letter E where the *gender barung* becomes prominent with a complex, yet soft and subtle nine-bar melody. This moment is the first time in this concerto where the harp will take a
step back dynamically in order to serve as accompaniment to a solo player in the ensemble. In performance it is difficult to hear this solo line, and the players, especially the harp with the brighter quality to its upper register, must step back several dynamic levels (see fig. 3.12).

Figure 3.12. *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan*, “III,” mm. 41-45, start of *gender barung* solo.

Rehearsal letter H is the climax of the movement and signifies the important arrival of the first *Pat* in the harp accompanied by interlocking triplets in the *bonang panerus* and *bonang barung*, and a duet between the *gender panerus* and *gender barung*. The harp has now passed the triplet patterns to the *bonang panerus* and *bonang barung* and begins to play duples. The two-against-three pattern has moved out of the harp and expands to incorporate the entire ensemble.

Rehearsal letter I is the important moment at which the composer steps outside of the *pélog* scale and uses an “unorthodox” pitch that the Javanese often refer to as *sorogan* (similar to a Western accidental). Alves has temporarily moved out of the *pélog pathet barung* scale and
into the pêlog pathet limâ scale with this section and places G-sharps in the harp against the pitch F in the gender barung and gender panerus. The G-sharp is the equivalent of the flattened fifth \((Ma = A)\) and can be brought in as an alternative. Interestingly, this “modal mixture” only occurs in the harp part. The accompanying instruments remain in the pêlog mode (see fig. 3.13).

This section begins at H but is really heard between m. 74 and m. 75 with the first harp pedal changes of the entire concerto. The dissonance increases in intensity until it instantly subsides later in section J. Alves is taking a momentary detour from the calmer mood of the earlier section by adding contrast through jarring dissonances that are not alleviated by the original pathet barung mode until m. 83.

![Figure 3.13. Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan, “III,” mm. 75-78, sorogan and “mode mixture” using G-sharp accidentals in the harp part.](image)

The ostinato in the harp continues the rhythmic momentum reached by rehearsal letter I but melodic and dynamic progress is halted and momentarily suspended through repetitive cycles and patterns in all parts except the gender panerus and gender barung. At rehearsal J Alves has placed the original melody first presented by the harp soloist at rehearsal A into the gender panerus part at full volume. At rehearsal letter K the harp remains in the bright upper register of the instrument which adds its own melody in octaves to further heighten the melodic and rhythmic variety of this climactic section.
The intensity is immediately dropped at section L with the nostalgic return of the original melody from rehearsal letter A, which is once again presented quietly and softly in the harp part. The movement has returned full cycle and then slightly deviates from its original presentation to draw the movement to a close in the harp part at m. 114. The pathet barang mode has been heard since rehearsal letter J, and the Ma pitch center is further reiterated in the harp, gong ageng, and gender panerus in the final measure.

Movement IV

The final movement is unified by a recurring theme that is traded between the harp and accompanying instruments. This theme is presented by gender panerus and gender barung at the start of the movement. Additionally, the segment between each rehearsal letter of the score lasts a total of eight bars and, like the third movement, the segments are signaled at their start by the gong ageng. Instead of a Ma pitch center (as seen in the second and third movements), this movement uses Pi as its pitch center.

The movement remains entirely in the pathet barang mode, and according to Alves, was originally written for harp solo. The pitch Ji never appears, and pitches Ro, Lu, Pat, Ma, Nem, and Pi, are equally represented throughout. The combination of the gender panerus, gender barung, and slenthem at the entrance of the work creates a softer, more subdued timbre that slowly eases the listener into the movement. The tempo does not increase at rehearsal letter A but the harp enters with smaller subdivisions in the right hand and syncopated patterns in the left hand to create the impression of speed. This entrance emerges from the background and gradually increases in volume until it reaches the foreground. The harp part has an added ornamental effect where the harpist pushes down the pedal in order to engage discs on particular vibrating strings. This pedal-slide effect bends the pitch upwards by a half step and adds a
different timbre to the pitches than has yet been heard in this concerto. This pitch-bending effect is not used often in Javanese vocal practices but is occasionally used in vocal contributions from the male vocal ensemble (members of the gérong) in the form of alok or senggakan. In particular, when singing a musical phrase, singers can incorporate rising syllables such as yo or yu in anticipation of the strike of the gong or kenong.59

Figure 3.14. *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan*, “IV,” mm. 8-11, pedal slides in the harp part that parallel Javanese vocal alok.

Throughout the beginning of the movement, the entrance of the harp at rehearsal letter A, and further into rehearsal letter B at m. 20, the gender panerus and gender barung play the main melody in complete unison. The gender parts are further supported by a steady accompanimental line in the slenthem, which adds a fuzzier quality to the melodic line. The saron with its brighter timbre plays in unison an octave higher than the slenthem and gives the steady moving line clarity by providing what can be described as more “front” to the pitches. This added “front” to the pitches is a direct result of a harder wooden mallet hitting the brass bars rather than a padded beater, such as what is used to strike the slenthem. The demung part does not enter until m. 17 at rehearsal letter B and trades off with the saron, further doubling the slenthem part, now in the same octave. This section increases its musical intensity by adding the bonang panerus and

59 Pickvance, 230.
"bonang barung" to the mix while the harp momentarily retreating from its rapid sixteenth-note figures.

In order to transition to the next section, Alves draws the accompanimental parts, including the harp, into one large rhythmic motive that lasts for a single bar before entering into rehearsal letter C at m. 25. This syncopated motive at m. 24 returns several times throughout the course of this movement and is reminiscent of the rhythmic patterns in the "bonang parts" in the second movement.

Figure 3.15. Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan, “IV,” mm. 22-24, recurring syncopated motive in "bonang" and harp parts.

At C (m. 25) all instruments halt their forward progress, and the harp begins an ostinato pattern that suspends any sense of momentum towards a new melodic or rhythmic idea. The harp part at rehearsal letter C begins by cycling its octave pattern at m. 25 a total of eight times, rising up a minor 3rd, repeating four times, then rising up a perfect 4th four more times. The alternation of the hands is quite challenging for the harpist, especially in regard to keeping track of the exact number of repetitions. This section is interesting. Alves slowly layers in one or two instruments at a time, the softer slenthem at m. 26, the kempul (m. 27), the gender panerus (m. 27), the gender barung (m. 29), and so forth. The effect is similar to a Western classical crescendo because, as the musical density increases, so too does the dynamic intensity (see fig. 3.16).
Figure 3.16. *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan, “IV,”* mm. 26-29, increasing musical intensity through the layering of various patterns in each instrument.

The melody that begins at rehearsal letter D in the *gender panerus* and *gender barung* parts reflects the same unifying melody seen at the beginning of the movement but it is now transposed down a minor 3rd. The *gender panerus* and *gender barung* melodies steadily meander around the same register, exploring similar rhythmic patterns and melodic ideas, lasting a total of thirty-two measures (mm. 33 to 64). At this juncture in rehearsal letter H, the *gender barung* and *gender panerus* parts deviate from playing in unison, and the *gender barung* joins the *slenthem* in a complex syncopated rhythmic pattern that interlocks in order to create the illusion of repetitive sixteenth notes. This effect, similar to Western classical “hocket,” continues in mm. 65-72, where the *bonang barung* and *bonang panerus* join with their own interlocking parts, until m. 76.

Rehearsal letter J is the first time in this entire movement where the harp replicates the main melody that was introduced by the *gender* parts in the beginning. The melody soars over complex interlocking parts in both the *bonang panerus* and *bonang barung*, interlocking parts in the *gender barung* and *gender panerus*, and the steady *slenthem*, *saron*, and *demung* lines in
unison. This presentation at J is further amplified an octave higher in the harp part at rehearsal letter K following the rhythmic motive from m. 23 and includes a dramatic glissando. All parts except the slenthem and kenong are now playing the melody at full volume in mm. 89-92, where we have reached the dynamic climax of the entire movement. The climax is short lived and all instruments quickly return to the exact same material that was presented in rehearsal letter A. Once again, the piece has created a full cycle by returning to how it began.

To close this movement, Alves adds a section similar to a coda where he increases the rhythmic intensity by layering syncopated figures in the harp and bonang parts at full volume. Alves indicates that a crescendo should be added as well, which subtly pushes the players and soloist to accelerate toward the final stroke of the gong ageng on the Ma pitch center. In Javanese karawitan, increased intensity at the close of a piece can be heightened by the acceleration of the decorating instruments. This fast ending, often additionally marked by a change in melodic patterns or full stop in particular instruments, is called a suwuk gropak and is implied by the composer at this juncture in the piece. The harp chord clusters contain all pitches that are presented in the accompanimental parts in order to reinforce a sense of finality in the movement. In m. 104 all parts play the exact same rhythm to draw the movement to a triumphant close with a final strike on the gong ageng (see fig. 3.17).

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60 Ibid., 35.
Figure 3.17. *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan*, “IV,” mm. 101-105, coda and syncopated rhythmic close to the concerto.

**Conclusion**

The *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan* combines elements of Javanese *karawitan* as well as Western forms and structures through melodic variation, motivic cyclism, large and small-scale formal repetition, textural expansion and contraction, emphasis on particular pitches are suggestive of the Western tonic, and much more. Like *karawitan*, this piece incorporates volume changes, the adaptation or omission of particular sections, large-scale changes in rhythm, and the combination of ‘plain’ or ‘decorated’ melodic lines.

Following the model of his teacher and mentor, Lou Harrison, whose music will be discussed in the next chapter, Alves has used a Western instrument in combination with the Indonesian gamelan, whether traditionally tuned or not, to achieve an effective hybridization of art forms that is unprecedented in non-Western inspired harp compositions. This chapter has provided both context and a detailed analysis of this concerto in the hope that this piece will be
added to the steadily growing body of harp repertoire influenced by non-Western musical traditions.
Chapter 4

‘A Harp is a Machine for Building Blocks’: A Contextual and Musical Analysis of Selected Eastern-Influenced Works for Harp by Lou Harrison

Introduction

The musical legacy of Lou Harrison, as it pertains to compositions that feature or include the harp, is highly diverse, reflecting Asian stylistic influences that draw their origins from Indonesia, India, and Korea. Beyond harp writing, Lou Harrison’s musical compositions; religious, moral, and political philosophies; experiments with the invention of unique instruments to serve his compositional needs; exploration of various tuning systems, and collaboration with other art forms such as dance, theatre, and architecture, have touched a countless number of lives, most especially the gamelan and harp composer discussed in the previous chapter, Bill Alves.

Born in 1917 in Portland, Oregon, Harrison led a rich and vibrant life that focused on bringing diverse musical, cultural, and artistic entities together as one. Those who knew him portray him as a skilled artist who was an increasingly complex, yet open-minded individual. Throughout his prolific career, Harrison endeavored to synthesize Eastern and Western musical styles through invention, hybridization, and assimilation. Scholars claim that his music was more Western than Eastern, but there is no denying that his replications and interpretations of Asian music, especially later in his career, were the closest interpretation to authentic traditional musics that had yet been attempted.61

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By the late 1990s he had more than three hundred compositions in his catalogue of repertoire, the great majority displaying a vast range of styles. In particular, Harrison’s music for harp is a direct result of his imaginative re-creation of Indonesian gamelan style, Asian modes, Northern or Southern Indian forms, or harp excerpts orchestrated alongside gamelan accompaniment. As depicted in his letter to guitarist John Schneider, he held a great appreciation for the harp and took great pains to assimilate it into new and preexisting compositions.

Harrison wrote for solo harp and for the harp in chamber and large ensemble settings. The pieces that are discussed in this chapter include the second movement (“In Honor of the Divine Mr. Handel”) of his Homage to Pacifica for gamelan, chorus, bassoon, harp, percussion, female voice, and psaltery; the movements “7a Paragrafo” and “Mantro Kaj Kunsonoro” of La Koro Sutro, written for mixed chorus with American gamelan, harp, and organ; and “Avalokiteśvara,” the fourth movement of his larger work titled Four Pieces for Harp.

Harrison’s compositions that include or were inspired by gamelan exhibit some consistencies that can shed light on his compositional style. Harrison was not overly concerned with creating works for non-Western instruments that directly reflected their original cultural traditions and musical forms. Some of his works for Javanese gamelan can be read and understood by Javanese musicians but still push the medium into a more hybridized musical realm.

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62 See Appendix C: Lou Harrison Letter to John Schneider.

63 John Schneider specializes in guitar pieces that require alternate tunings. For notable recordings of Harrison’s harp pieces transcribed for guitar, see John Schneider, Por Gitaro: Lou Harrison’s Suites for Tuned Guitars, Mode Records, CD, 2008.
Harrison sought to create distinctive gamelan pieces that reflected a basic amalgamation of traditional Indonesian musical practices. A firm advocate of melodicism, Harrison’s interpretation of the balungan, the linear melody that forms the skeleton upon which all gamelan instrumental parts are based, is worthy of consideration. His devotion to the potential intricacies and possibilities of a melody guided most of his works, providing the foundation on which he was able to add contrapuntal textures, rhythmic motives, and other compositional techniques.\(^6\)

The musical language in which he spoke varies dramatically from piece to piece, and his complex contrapuntal and rhythmic jargon can even shift within movements. His biographers, Leta Miller and Fredric Lieberman, explain his juxtaposing avenues, stating,

The composition process became, at some level, an intriguing game: carefully formulated “controls” were hidden under decorative outer clothing. Listeners are not likely to be aware of the compositional process. Indeed, reviewers often comment on the semi-improvisatory character of Harrison’s works without realizing that beneath the perceived freedom is a carefully built armature.\(^5\)

Miller and Lieberman group Harrison’s compositional output into three areas of development: 1) creative fusions and synthesis of Asian and Western musics, 2) the development of the percussion ensemble using newly invented and/or adapted musical instruments, and 3) the exploration and implementation of various Western and non-Western tuning systems. In music for the Indonesian gamelan, there are various layers of rhythmic expansion and contraction that circumvent the melodic framework of the balungan. The constant diminution and augmentation of these layers can either obscure or emphasize this melody, and in traditional gamelan practices, it may even be lost within the complex polyphonic texture. These melodic boundaries create

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\(^6\) This strong sense of melodicism gives his music a notably lyrical character that even appears in his twelve-tone and percussion-based works. Leta E. Miller and Fredric Leiberman, *Lou Harrison* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 3.

\(^5\) Miller and Leiberman, 4.
patterns of specified ranges and units of eight or sixteen beats that traditionally cycle around the *gongan*, the strike of the large gong (*gong ageng*) on the final beat of the cycle.

However, breaking from tradition, Harrison brings this melody to the foreground where it is more pronounced structurally and more aurally obvious to the listener. Harrison chooses to cycle his melodies around the *gongan* to reflect Indonesian practice but will choose unusual beat patterns for each cycle, such as ten- or twelve-beat patterns that remain the same or alternate.\(^6\)

*Homage to Pacifica*

Commissioned by the Gerbode Foundation, *Homage to Pacifica* was written in 1991 and premiered on October 4, 1991, for the inauguration of the headquarters of the Pacifica Foundation in Berkeley, California. Two movements were later choreographed for dancers by Mark Morris and performed on October 27, 1995.\(^7\) The work is a substantial thirty-seven minutes in length and is orchestrated for Javanese gamelan (both sléndro and pélog sets), bassoon, percussion, harp, psaltery, chorus, solo voice, and narrator.

*Homage to Pacifica* was created during a troubling period of uncertainty when the Gulf War between America and Iraq had just come to a close. The horrors of war prompted Harrison to return to composing works that expressed his own political agendas and philosophies. In this vein, there are a total of eight movements (Harrison’s original score designates that each “Interlude” be combined with its adjacent “Ode” or “Litany” to create a total of six movements instead), two of which incorporate text written by Harrison and two other figures in American history whose words correlate to his beliefs and philosophies. Harrison added two anti-imperialist texts by Mark Twain and Chief Seattle in the third and eighth movements that seek to

\(^{66}\) Ibid., 165.

\(^{67}\) Ibid., 34.
demonstrate his open frustration with military aggression and his appreciation for other races, especially Native Americans. An advocate of cross-cultural fellowship, Harrison envisioned a unified world under the international Esperanto language, free of violence and environmentally sound. These themes and Harrison’s utopian visions were expressed in his lectures, writings, and music throughout his entire life.

The movements are listed as follows in Harrison’s original score: I. “Prelude,” II. “In Honor of the Divine Mr. Handel,” III. “Mark Twain on the Philippines,” IV. “Interlude and Ode,” V. “Interlude and Litany,” and VI. “From the Testimony of Chief Seattle.” Harp parts are present in both movement II, which is quite substantial, and in movement IV. For the purposes of this discussion, priority is given to “In Honor of the Divine Mr. Handel.”

This movement is a result of more than a decade of experience with gamelan compositions and is a good example of Harrison’s more mature compositional style. Harrison greatly admired G.F. Handel’s melodic spontaneity and creativity and cites the composer as one of his main inspirations. Harrison was drawn to Handel’s Harp Concerto in B-flat Major, in large part based on the opening four-note motive in the first movement (see fig. 4.1). To Harrison’s delight, several times throughout the piece, Harrison quoted a transposed form of the motive to

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68 Ibid.

69 The narration of the text in “Prelude” was improvised by director Jody Diamond in the style of a solo Javanese female vocalist (pesindhēn). The text We Shall Overcome was chosen by Diamond and was intermingled with Pacifica Foundation radio station call letters such as KPFA, KPFK, WBAI, etc. Ibid., 187-188.

70 This movement is also referred to as “In Honor of Chief Seattle” with text from the 1894 speech of Chief Seattle (1786-1866) describing a utopian vision focusing on the “interconnectedness of all life forms.”

71 Handel’s Harp Concerto in B-flat Major was originally written for harp and was part of the oratorio Alexander’s Feast, then later published for organ.
arrive on F instead of B-flat. Harrison was able to recreate this figure on his homemade gamelan (named *Si Betty*). Constructed by Colvig, this gamelan was made of aluminum and tuned to the *pélog* scale.

Figure 4.1. Stepwise similarity of the opening motive between A) Harrison’s “In Honor of the Divine Mr. Handel” and B) Handel’s Harp Concerto in B-flat, Movement I.\(^{72}\)

The movement is divided into three distinct sections (A, B, and C) that are delineated by the adaptation and inclusion or omission of melodic arrangement and patterns in the harp part, as well as the alternation of loud and soft playing styles in the gamelan accompaniment. The first A section is composed entirely of a gamelan introduction, which Harrison scholar Henry Spiller describes as relating to the grand *tutti* section in a Baroque concerto that presents the main thematic material in preparation for the soloist. In the original score, Harrison avoids Western notation and writes this section in cipher notation for *saron, demung, slenthem, kempul,* and *gong* in the manner that is characteristic of current Javanese compositional practice (see fig. 4.2).

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\(^{72}\) Lou Harrison, “In Honor of the Divine Mr. Handel,” Manuscript, MS 132, Series 1, subseries 3, Box 20:8, Special Collections Exhibits, Lou Harrison Archive, University of California Santa Cruz Library, Santa Cruz, CA.
After two repeats of the gamelan introduction, the harp enters with the opening motive that is followed by a series of broken traveling octaves in the right hand that are supported by open-hand octaves in the left hand. Following gamelan melodic structure, the upper melody in the right-hand thumb generally remains stepwise and is regularly punctuated by interjections of Handel’s transposed four-note motive.

In order to explain the nature of this motive in the context of Western and Javanese performance traditions, a discussion of metrical emphasis is needed. In music for the Javanese gamelan, there are two levels of stress (dhing and dhong) with the heaviest amount of musical and structural emphasis focused on the final beat. This end-weighted (versus the Western front-weighted) conception of rhythm associates all rhythmic subdivisions with an emphasis on the last beat of a measure rather than the first. The pitches at these goals (seléh) are considered important arrival points on which all rhythmic subdivisions and embellishments are based. Spiller expands upon the structural, rhythmic, and melodic importance of this motive in the context of Javanese as well as Western music traditions, stating,
The 4-note motif serves as a thematic cell for the entire piece. I suspect that Harrison was drawn to the Handel motif because it sounds like a Javanese embellishment both melodically and rhythmically—a four-note, stepwise pattern that leads to and ends on the accented structural goal note. Yet, it also sounds like the Western rhythmic and melodic gesture—a scalar anacrusis, starting on the dominant and establishing the tonic on the first beat of the measure. … After the first iteration, the gamelan repeats [the motif] with variations specified by Harrison in rehearsals (but not in the score), including imbal (interlocking figurations) on some of the metallophones, which anticipate the next structural pitch and thus strengthen a Javanese end-weighted interpretation of rhythm.  

Harrison then deviates from this end-weighted approach in section B by placing the main pitches on the downbeat of each measure. The act of adding embellishments and subdivisions after the arrival of the pitch goals signifies a return to the Western understanding of rhythmic structure in a measure. The pitch goals, in cipher notation, are clearly labeled in the original score (see fig. 4.3).

Figure 4.3. “In Honor of the Divine Mr. Handel,” section B, with pitch goal indications in cipher notation on beat one of each measure in the harp part.

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73 Spiller, 44.

74 Lou Harrison, “In Honor of the Divine Mr. Handel,” Manuscript, MS 132, Series 1, Subseries 3, Vocal, Box 20:8, Special Collections Exhibits, Lou Harrison Archive, University of California Santa Cruz Library, Santa Cruz, CA.
Section B shifts in volume to give way to a complex harp part composed of running eighth notes. The drop in volume is a direct result of Harrison omitting the more prominent metallophones and pushing the harp to its brighter upper register. The B section is repeated twice with the same gamelan accompaniment; then the third, final section C arrives with a return of the introductory theme in the harp, now an octave higher. The front-weighted approach to this section is similar to section B, and Harrison makes a clear indication of a dominant-to-tonic arrival to close the piece with a C-to-F cadential gesture in the last two measures of the harp part (see fig 4.4).

Figure 4.4. “In Honor of the Divine Mr. Handel,” section C, Western dominant-tonic characteristic ending (C to F in F Major).  

*La Koro Sutro*

*La Koro Sutro* was composed in 1972 and premiered on August 11, 1972, at San Francisco State University upon the request of Cathy Schulze (associated with the Esperanto Information Center) following an Esperanto seminar in Seattle. In this multi-movement work, Harrison incorporates the text of the *Heart Sutra*, an influential Mahāyāna Buddhist writing that reflects upon the nature and wisdom of existence and non-existence. Harrison asked his friend Bruce Kennedy to translate the text into Esperanto, which he later translated to English.

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75 Lou Harrison, *La Koro Sutro*, Manuscript MS 132, Series 1, Subseries 3, Vocal, Box 20:8, Special Collections Exhibits, Lou Harrison Archive, University of California Santa Cruz Library, Santa Cruz, CA.
La Koro Sutro was written for an SATB chorus, small organ (which used Pythagorean temperament), harp, and Harrison’s Old Granddad (a.k.a. American Gamelan). This piece was later arranged by Kerry Lewis around 1977 for string orchestra, piano, celesta, two harps, and percussion. Harrison describes his inspirations and motivations for the orchestration, writing:

For this work, my friend and partner, William Colvig, created many instruments. The small tube and slab gamelan, which is used with other percussion instruments, has become known as Old Granddad Gamelan, for it is the first of the Western American Gamelan to employ aluminum tubes and slabs (handsomely resonated with #10 Billy cans collected from back doors of restaurants), which have since been used in the building of many Gamelan. Bill and I tuned the Gamelan to a perfect Northwest Asian (European) natural scale; that is to say, much like a C Major would be if you sang it or played it on string instruments, although the gamelan is actually in D major. It is a joy to sing with because the orchestra tuning is the same as you would use with your voice. Towards the end (in the next to the last movement), I needed another key system to contrast the basic scales that I had been using. I didn’t have the heart to ask Bill to create a new set of instruments, so I threw in a harp! This has proven to be a good choice because it works well with the other instruments and provides a pleasant contrast.

There are nine parts to this monumental work, which lasts a total of twenty-nine minutes. The movements and paragraphs are listed as follows: “Kunsonoro Kaj Gloro” (“Chime and Glory”), 1a-7a Paragrafos (paragraphs), and “Mantro Kaj Kunsonoro” (“Mantram and Chime”).

La Koro Sutro is predominantly pentatonic and incorporates unison choral textures that remain either monophonic or create an antiphonal exchange between voices in higher or lower registers. Only a few of the original handwritten fragments remain extant today, but for the purposes of this study, the original harp parts from the “7a Paragrafo” and the finale “Mantro Kaj

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For the harp’s appearance in the penultimate movement, “7a Paragrafo,” the harp was tuned to the small organ using Pythagorean temperament and purposely caused to use pitches that are not typically present in Harrison’s American gamelan to create contrast. The part is accompanimental and consists solely of the pitches F, B-flat, and C, which cycle through a single three-finger pattern, both hands in unison, one octave apart. These three pitches, in combination with the small organ, generate a drone in hexatonic F minor. The harp plays for seventy-five measures and then is tacet for the remaining portion of the movement (see fig. 4.5).

78. The texts (translated from Esperanto to English) for these two movements are as follows:

“Seventh Paragraph” (“7a Paragrafo”)

*Know then this: the Transcendental Wisdom Mantram of true greatness, mantram of great knowledge, yea the utmost mantram, mantram without equal. remedy for every ill arising, truth, no deviation! By the Transcendental Wisdom has the mantram been delivered.*

“Mantram and Chime” (“Mantro Kaj Kunsonoro”)

*Going, going, going on beyond, awake, all hail!*
There was an additional harp part added to the final movement, “Mantra Kaj Kunsonoro,” which was edited and copied by Margaret Fisher. In a handwritten letter to Fisher addressing the new ending in “Mantra Kaj Kunsonoro,” Harrison writes,

In S.F. [San Francisco] we found out that our lowest slabs in “Old Granddad” were much higher when Karen played a four-octave spread, ff, along with them, so, I would be grateful if you’d make out a harp part to that effect. Of course we’ll need to see to the score as well … I don’t know how.  

Harrison included a handwritten sketch in the letter, which outlines the tempo, octave configuration, and general intervallic movement he wanted from the harpist. The harp is not clearly audible because of the full volume of the choir but serves a supportive role by reinforcing the D-major pentatonic in this closing mantra with unison octaves in each hand (see fig. 4.6).

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79 Lou Harrison, La Koro Sutro, Manuscript, Box 20:4, MS. 132, Ser. 1, #9, Special Collections Exhibits, Lou Harrison Archive, University of California Santa Cruz Library, Santa Cruz, CA.

80 See Appendix D for the original letter. Lou Harrison, La Koro Sutro, Manuscript, Box 20:4, MS. 132, Ser. 1, #9, Special Collections Exhibits, Lou Harrison Archive, University of California Santa Cruz Library, Santa Cruz, CA.
Harrison’s composition “Avalokiteśvara” is among several works written between the 1960s and 1970s that demonstrate his experimentation with musical elements in Korean and Chinese music. As such, this piece is only indirectly related to music for the Indonesian gamelan, in part because of similarities in repetitive melodic figurations and structures rather than mode and instrumentation. This brief piece (two minutes in length) was written in 1964, was premiered on December 29, 1964, in San Francisco, and is composed for harp (or guitar/grand psaltery) with jahalataranga (tuned-water bowls). In Harrison’s original working score, he noted in the title that the piece was a sonata, and in the margins he added various potential instrumentations.

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81 Lou Harrison, *La Koro Sutro*, Box 20:4 MS. 132, Ser. 1, #9, Special Collections Exhibits, Lou Harrison Archive, University of California Santa Cruz Library, Santa Cruz, CA.
scribbled in pencil. Based upon these sketches, we can assume he was toying with the idea of incorporating accompaniment using “muted gongs or tubs,” organ, and possibly a drum. He later settled on jahalataranga and gave the approval for a guitar transcription.

For the premiere performance of “Avalokiteśvara,” difficulties with the tuned water bowls were critical in the later formation of Harrison’s famous gamelan, Old Granddad, which was self-constructed using homemade materials to reflect the just-tempered scale. For the San Francisco performance, Harrison and his partner, Bill Colvig, carefully prepared the pitch of each water bowl using eye droppers to achieve the desired water level, covering each with plastic wrap to avoid evaporation. Eventually, small gas bubbles collected along the meniscus, which unfortunately elicited a dull thud when the bowls were struck. Frustrated with the complex and unreliable preparation with the water bowls, Colvig later resolved to create an instrument that required a less tedious procedure to achieve Harrison’s desired pitch.

Written at a time when he was greatly interested in Buddhism and Asian music after his travels to Korea and Thailand, Harrison titled and dedicated this piece to Avalokiteśvara, the Buddha of Compassion, who is a revered spiritual and supernatural being that stems from Mahāyāna Buddhist devotional practice and philosophy. According to Mahāyāna belief, Avalokiteśvara (in Sanskrit: “who looks down on sound”) is a celestial bodhisattava (enlightened being) who has chosen to delay achieving enlightenment and instead vows to aid sentient beings in their endeavor to reach Nirvana. This figure, compassion personified, is depicted as either male or female and is believed to gaze down from the heavens, listening to the cries of humans who need spiritual aid. There are multiple manifestations of Avalokiteśvara according to
different Buddhist schools of thought such as Theravāda and Tibetan Buddhism as well as representations in Hindu belief and philosophy.\textsuperscript{82}

Harrison includes elements of North Indian (Hindustani) musical traditions in his choice of instrumentation (harp, drums, and jahalataranga) and in the rhythmic and melodic arrangement of the accompaniment and melody. In this piece, Harrison replicates what is called jāhlā. This Hindi term translates to “sparkle” and is an effect and musical style that is generally played in the fast final section of a Hindustani raga performance. The effect is normally created on string instruments such as the sitar or sarod and is executed by swiftly strumming the string (chikari), which is tuned to the fundamental pitch (drone), in alternation with the strings that contain the pitches that form the raga (see fig. 4.7). Demonstrating this alternation by splitting each pitch between the hands, Harrison has titled this effect “India’s answer to the Alberti bass.”\textsuperscript{83}

This treatment of the melodic line can also be indirectly related to garap in music for the Central Javanese gamelan (karawitan). Garap (literally translates “to work out”) is the process of sharing a pattern or sequence of notes, even if not explicitly repeated, between one or two players on the same instrument (imbal technique). Garap has often been related to “hocketing” in Western music. In “Avalokiteśvara” the two melodies are separate and therefore not a true garap; however, when realized by the harpist in performance (especially in order to accommodate leaps between the hands), the interlocking and alternating patterns played on the same instrument are similar.

\textsuperscript{82} Written in pencil at the base of the original working draft of the score, Harrison includes the name “Mahāsthāmaprāpta” (arrival of great strength) who is an older and powerful bodhisattava, closely related to Avalokiteśvara. Carl Olson, \textit{The Different Paths of Buddhism: A Narrative-Historical Introduction} (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 161.

\textsuperscript{83} Lou Harrison, \textit{Music Primer} (New York: Peters, 1971), 113.
Figure 4.7. “Avalokiteśvara,” Introduction, jāhlā as it relates to garap.84

“Avalokiteśvara” is written in one of the Korean modes known as sangjo. His applied music teacher, Lee Hye-Ku, introduced Harrison to this mode as well as traditional Asian instruments such as the cheng. A historian and scholar, Lee connected this mode with Confucian orchestral music and likely had another name for this mode that he described to Harrison as relating to the word “delightful.”85 The sangjo mode emphasizes the pitches F-sharp, A, B, D, and E-natural and can be indirectly related to Javanese gamelan music as it might pertain to the pentatonic sléndro scale. Based on a traditionally tuned Javanese gamelan that resides at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, the sléndro relationship to Western pitches are approximated as follows: 1) Ji=D, 2) Ro=E, 3) Lu=F, 5) Ma=A, 6) Nem=B-flat. The pitches needed to create the Korean mode (D, E, F-sharp, A) are closely related to the pitches outlined by Javanese pělog pathet bem (D, E, F, A, B-flat). Harrison provides the pitches in the following order: E, F-sharp, B, A, and D (see fig. 4.8).

84 Lou Harrison, Avalokiteśvara, Box 24:4 MS.132, Ser. 1, #4, Special Collections Exhibits, Lou Harrison Archive, University of California Santa Cruz Library, Santa Cruz, CA.

85 Bill Alves, e-mail message to author, December 12, 2015.
“Avalokiteśvara” is unmeasured, and the division of the main melody and the more subtle underlying melody distributed between the hands helps to reveal the intervallic structure of the two melodies and their complex coordination. In the classical music of Central Java (karawitan), musical lines generally follow a stepwise pattern with short recurring motives. The primary motives in the right hand of the harp part closely follow this characteristic. The melody, including the intermittent grace-note figures, meanders within a large range of two octaves, yet lacks the strong sense of internal contrast normally heard with large intervallic leaps in Western melodic practices.

Harrison was first exposed to the gamelan in the 1930s long before he visited Indonesia. Before he truly understood how to fully realize gamelan music through traditional structures and notational practices, he aimed to simulate the aural qualities of Indonesian music such as in his Suite for Violin, Piano, and Small Orchestra (1951). Thus, despite the fact that Harrison did not directly write “Avalokiteśvara” with the gamelan in mind, he has never the less recreated the general aural and melodic qualities of the gamelan through melodic repetition, the layering of musical lines, and alternating patterns that allude to imbal technique between both hands of the harpist.
Conclusion

Contemporary gamelan and world-music composer Lou Harrison was a central figure in the musical genre that became known as music for the American gamelan. His works were written for Western ensembles as well as Eastern ensembles and represent creative fusions of Southeast Asian, Asian, and Western classical music traditions. Through years of diligent study and experience performing, creating and altering instruments, and exploring world-music traditions, Harrison was able to comfortably hybridize disparate genres into a single musical entity that could appeal to both Western and Eastern audiences alike.

In his research focusing on the impact of globalization on musical hybridization, author Bob White states that “hybridity is concerned with intercultural encounters in which people from different traditions or lives come into contact with one another, followed by the changing hands of cultural artifacts.” In his study of gamelan music in the West, Javanese musician and scholar Sumarsam further comments, “Such an intercultural exchange brings about both change to and continuity of cultural tradition … and can lead the tradition not only to a happy fusion and synthesis, but also to ambiguity and ambivalence.” In light of these cultural exchanges generated by Harrison, this chapter has therefore sought to explore the cultural artifacts that characterize fusions of Indonesian, Indian, and Korean rhythms, ornamentations, cyclical phrase structures, and modes with Western classical music as found in contemporary compositions for the harp. The following chapter serves to highlight selected harp works of Alan Hovhaness, who

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inspired Harrison with his hybridized representations and extra-musical philosophies of the East and West.
Chapter 5
Southeast Asian Inspirations: Alan Hovhaness and the Harp

Introduction

The stereotypical compositional techniques and aural cues that have grown to symbolize the Western notion of musical “exoticism” or “orientalism” may have originated from superficial interpretations of the music of Asia and Indonesia by nineteenth- and twentieth-century composers. Characteristic features of Southern, Far Eastern, and Southeast Asian music, such as pentatonic and whole-tone scales, became an identifying signal in orientalist works. For the pianist, composer, conductor, and mystic Alan Hovhaness (1911-2000), the musical idioms and cultural artifacts from India, Korea, Japan, and Indonesia were not novelty items. Hovhaness’s intimate relationship with the sights, sounds, and philosophies of the East resulted in more highly sophisticated compositions and musical practices than had been realized by his predecessors. His works continue to be a valuable addition to the East-to-West discourse and paved the way for composers such as Lou Harrison whose gamelan pieces were highlighted in the previous chapter.

The legacy of Alan Hovhaness includes a musical output of more than five hundred works, fifty of which were symphonies, and an estimated ninety-one of which include harp. Summarizing an entire career built upon varied and heterogeneous musical output is quite a challenge when seeking to investigate and clarify Hovhaness’s characteristic musical style. In order to reach a thorough understanding of Hovhaness’s musical hybridization of Eastern and Western music traditions, an in-depth analytical study and contextual evaluation of his music, life, and philosophies is required. Additionally, the refined and seamless manner in which Hovhaness blended two distant performing traditions is a valuable discussion to be added to the growing field of globalization and music. Hovhaness’s works are especially worthy of study in
order to fully disavow accusations that his music is “simple” or “lacks…expected techniques of classical or even modern traditions.”

Hovhaness was a deeply spiritual individual who ardently pursued his own personal approach to Western classical composition. Despite his appreciation of Eastern art forms, Hovhaness was still a product of the Western classical-music tradition. His Eastern-inspired music exhibits a subtle representation and fusion of Asian influences into Western compositional practices. His original compositions set the stage for arguably more “authentic” Western realizations of world music in the decades that followed. These realizations gained momentum in the mid twentieth and twenty-first centuries and were further developed by Lou Harrison, John Cage, Toru Takemitsu, José Maceda, and others.

In works composed in the 1940s and 50s, for example, it is common to find clever fusions of Western, Southeast Asian, and Indian compositional elements in *senza misura* cadenzas that maintain an air of improvisation and contrapuntal stratification achieved through the layering of rhythmically and melodically independent instrumental lines. It is also not unusual to see and hear harmonically static sections achieved through the cyclic treatment of large- and small-scale musical patterns.

Hovhaness wrote compositions for many varied instrumental combinations, such as his *Canticle* op. 115, for soprano, oboe, xylophone, celesta, harp, and strings and his *Sextet* op. 108, for violin and five percussionists. Bruce Duffie asked the composer: “When you're writing, do you write for the public, or for yourself, or for your players? Whom do you have in your mind?” Hovhaness responded about his love of various instruments, stating,

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I think I have everybody. The players I especially have in mind, because I want to write as beautifully as possible for every instrument. And I love the orchestra. I feel that the orchestra is not understood as well as it could be by many composers. Orchestration is so easy to make too thick and muddy. I want every note to be heard. And I love all of the instruments very much and want to do things that are natural for those instruments. I like to go back to the origin of the instrument—where did it come from, what was it related to, even in mythology and ancient times. What’s the soul of that instrument? That’s what I’m interested in.\(^{89}\)

In regard to the Indonesian gamelan, Hovhaness’s first known piece that explicitly evoked the visual, aural, and formal qualities of Southeast Asian music appeared in 1950 in the fifth movement of his String Quartet No. 2 op. 147, titled “Gamelan in Sosi Style.” Later in his career, following more prolonged periods of Far Eastern travel, experience, and study, he composed two pieces that incorporate the gamelan titled: *Stars Sing Bell Song* op. 350/1, for soprano and Javanese gamelan, and *Pleiades* op. 350/2, for Javanese gamelan.

When describing his music, listeners and critics such as Virgil Thomson often portray Hovhaness’s music as “pure in spirit,” “delightful to the ear,” “a pleasure to the thought.” In a music criticism published by the *New York Herald Tribune* on February 8, 1947, Thompson continues, “The high quality of the music, the purity of inspiration, is evidenced in the extreme beauty of the melodic material, which is original material, not collected folklore.”\(^ {90}\)

In light of Hovhaness’s “predominantly religious, ceremonial, and incantatory” aural associations described by Thomson, I examine the extra-musical undercurrents of Asian philosophy and natural phenomena that helped to inspire the formal and aural qualities of the


composer’s characteristic sound. Confirmed by the composer himself, it is widely understood that the inspiration and context of the majority of his compositions were conceived through the lens of spiritual, celestial, or other non-Western inspired themes. When questioned about the religious and cosmic overtones in his music, Hovhaness claimed in an interview with Bruce Duffie, “…I'm religious, in a way. I find good in all religions, so I'm not just trying to sell religion, like an insurance man.” He later commented, “I don't want to either influence or be influenced by other composers. You need to find out what the truth is within oneself, because we're all tiny universes, related to the great universe.” Therefore, the first section of this chapter is dedicated to the biographical origins of these themes and uses a broader, contextual approach to evaluate his musical style in order to simultaneously understand the man behind the music and the music behind the man.

In the second portion of this chapter, I go one step farther in the discussion of Hovhaness’s musical style by analyzing key works that specifically include harp. Not all of Hovhaness’s compositions with harp, whether solo, orchestral, or chamber settings, exhibit Southeast Asian influences. However, a strong case can be made for such influences in three works: Upon Enchanted Ground op. 90/1 (1951), for harp, flute, cello, and tam-tam; The Flowering Peach op. 125 (1954), for E-flat alto saxophone, B-flat clarinet, vibraphone, glockenspiel, celesta, tam-tam, timpani, and harp or piano; and Island of Mysterious Bells op.

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91 Ibid.

92 Bruce Duffie interview with Alan Hovhaness.

93 Ibid.
244 (1971), for harp quartet. These pieces demonstrate gamelan influences in their formal structures, rhythmic and melodic textures, and extra-musical associations.

**Hybridizing the East and West: An Initial Overview of Hovhaness’s Musical Style**

Hovhaness’s vast range of musical styles requires a discussion of the evolution of his musical career. Divided into four distinct periods, each stylistic period is the result of important events in the composer’s life that directly affected his compositional and philosophical thought processes. According to Arnold Rosner, who in his 1972 dissertation presented the first full-fledged analytical study of Hovhaness’s compositions, the four periods are as follows: 1) 1930-1943, 2) 1943-1950, 3) 1950-1960, and 4) 1960-2000.

The first period (1930-1943) is the most challenging to define because of individuals and events that inspired Hovhaness to destroy, withdraw, or rework much of his entire compositional output from that time. Compositions from this first period that included harp may have been discarded and those that came later may represent the recomposition or revision of previous works. Therefore, assigning opus numbers to his earlier works has proven to be problematic. Some scholars, such as Rosner, speculate that the “destruction of these works… was a sign of revelation, of sacrifice, or a quasi-Oriental removal from self.”

Reportedly, at the Tanglewood Music Festival in 1943 Hovhaness was mocked by his colleagues Leonard Bernstein and Aaron Copland. The treatment disenchanted the young

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94 For additional study, see the first movement of Hovhaness’s Concerto for Harp op. 267 (1973), for harp and string orchestra that simulates Indonesian gongan formal structure through the use of the lower octaves in the harp.

95 To my knowledge, no substantial post-1972 analytical summarizations and evaluations of Hovhaness’s later compositional style (up till his death in 2000) have been published.

96 Rosner, 23.
composer, and he immediately sought solace through the teachings of the mystic Hermon di Giovanni. Di Giovanni had a profound influence on Hovhaness’s spiritual and philosophical perspective and introduced the composer to Asian concepts of self-denial, the ego, and the nature of being. In the 1930s, Hovhaness was exposed to a great deal of Indian music by several musicians located in Boston, which paved the way to his later Armenian and Asian musical interests. Di Giovanni further reinforced these Eastern leanings in the developing composer and planted seeds that would later shape the ideological and formal landscape of Hovhaness’s compositional style. Subsequently, the events at Tanglewood, the influence of di Giovanni, and arguably, personal dissatisfaction with his music led to his destroying many of his early works in order to begin anew.97

According to the catalog assembled in 2010 by Marco Shirodkar, Hovhaness first started composing for harp in 1937 with his Cello Concerto op. 17 no. 1, for timpani, harp, and strings; his Symphony No. 1 op. 17/2, (commonly referred to as the “Exile Symphony”); and his Nocturne op. 20 no. 1, for solo harp.98 Some other works do not have confirmed dates but we can assume, based on what information is currently available, that his early experimentation with

97 Hovhaness describes his reasoning for destroying his works in an interview with Bruce Duffie:

**BD:** I understand you destroyed some very early works. Is that true?
**AH:** Yes, I destroyed a great deal… I was always growing, and I always wrote so much… I'm glad a few things were published, and so those I didn't destroy. But I destroyed too many pieces. But since I was living in a tiny room, I didn't have the space for many things. I guess I just didn't want to see anything that I didn't feel was very good. See Bruce Duffie interview with Alan Hovhaness.

98 Note a discrepancy in opus numbers: The Cello Concerto is listed by the composer as op. 27 and Symphony No. 1 is listed as op. 17. In 1970, Symphony No. 1 received extensive revisions and the Nocturne for solo harp was revised later in 1961. Marco Shirodkar, “Alan Hovhaness List of Works,” The Alan Hovhaness Website, http://www.hovhaness.com/hovhaness_works.html (accessed February 13, 2016).
harp, especially the *Nocturne*, more closely resembled the Armenian inspired pieces from his second period.99

The second period (1943- c.1950) is often labeled as the “Armenian Period” and marks the stage in Hovhaness’s career when he withdrew even further from Western ideas and compositional practices. Near the end of the first period and into this second period the gradual progression and inclination towards Eastern formal structures and melodic styles became clearer. The influence of di Giovanni further helped reacquaint Hovhaness with his own Armenian heritage, and he began to play organ at a Boston Armenian church and to study non-Western musical modes and forms. The melodic and formal treatment of the pieces from this era is recognized by the application of Armenian modes, fusions of diatonic and non-diatonic scales and harmonies to create unique minor-major juxtapositions, and the suppression or collation of formal and harmonic hierarchies as a result of canons and cyclism. In this second period, there are very few, solo, chamber, or orchestral compositions written for harp.

The third period (1950- c.1960) in Hovhaness’s development built upon the musical traits and non-Western formal characteristics of previous periods and is regarded as the most varied and versatile era in his compositional career. Large- and small-scale works from this period incorporate a conglomeration of older, yet now more fully developed, techniques and formulas from previous periods. These pieces, often using unusual instrumentations, applied several (rather than one or two) non-Western compositional devices in the span of a single work.

Interestingly, the rapid evolution of his reputation paralleled the broadening of his compositional style. Music inspired by folk and Eastern traditions was steadily coming into

99 For further study, notice the similarities in melodic treatment for *Nocturne* as compared with the characteristics of the vocal and piano melody of *Yar Nazani* op. 24/1 (1938), for voice and piano; *The Flute Player of the Armenian Mountains* op. 239 (1945), for voice and piano; and *12 Armenian Folk Songs* op. 43 (1943), for solo piano.
vogue in the 1950s, and Hovhaness’s reputation as a composer gained in stature. At the start of this third period Hovhaness was teaching at the Boston Conservatory of Music, but in 1951 he moved to New York where he could more aggressively pursue composing. In New York he worked for the U.S. government’s radio broadcasting institution *Voice of America* where he served as the director of the Near East and Trans-Caucasian division. He began to write music for theater, dance, television, and radio, and later in this decade, he composed soundtracks for two NBC documentaries titled “Assignment India” and “Assignment South-East Asia.”

Hovhaness’s fourth period roughly spans 1960 to his death in 2000 and is a reflection of his travels to India, Hawaii, Japan, Korea, and Switzerland. Hovhaness reached his compositional maturity at this point and, despite its great variety, his music is characterized by less evocative and more deliberate non-Western musical designs. In 1959 Hovhaness was granted a Fulbright Research Scholarship to India where he had the opportunity to work alongside native Indian musicians and study Karnātic (South Indian) composition. He continued his travels after visiting Japan in 1960, and in 1962 he received a Rockefeller Grant to study the ancient Korean court music *Ah-ak* in Korea, and *Bunraku* in Japan.

These cultural interactions added new elements to Hovhaness’s compositional outlook and subsequently paved the way to innovative combinations of both Western and non-Western harp writing. Hovhaness’s harp output more than tripled, and he regularly incorporated the instrument into the majority of his large-scale works such as Symphony No. 15 op. 202 (1962), Symphony No. 18 op. 204a (1963), and Symphony No. 19 (*Vishnu*) op. 217 (1966). Japanese-

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101 Rosner, 14.

102 Shirodkar.
inspired works with harp parts and soli appeared, such as Two Sonatas op. 110 (1962), for koto or harp; *Floating World (Ukiyo): Ballade for Orchestra* op. 209 (1964); *Fantasy on Japanese Wood Prints* op. 211 (1964); and others.

In the 1960s, a less subtle Hovhaness juxtaposed grand, heroic themes with sparse, yet highly dissonant punctuations of rhythm and sound. The stringing together of rhythm-less passages abounds in this period, and he retains his non-Western flavor through the application of glissandi and pitch bending in the harp as well as in timpani and trombone. Drone-like figures (tonic pedal-points) created by octaves in the harp’s resonating bass wires were a regular occurrence underneath unison string melodies. Harmonic motion was gradually withdrawn to give way to repetitive melodic patterns and purposely uncoordinated aleatoric music (chance music).\(^{103}\)

Hovhaness’s musical style during this period is best described by Shirodkar, who says,

The most obvious change in Hovhaness’ music of the 1970s (and thereafter) was the retreat from overtly oriental/Eastern sounding devices. If anything, Hovhaness veered towards a more Western neo-romantic approach, but still within the realms of rhapsodic melody and mystical expression. Noteworthy is the expansion of harmony from purely modal (as in the 1960s) to fully chromatic, including whole-tone and diminished chords. As always, these relationships serve purely for their sensory effects. When referring to an early 1970s work, Hovhaness wrote: ‘this period in my music is going toward a romantic expression.’\(^{104}\)

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\(^{103}\) For further study, see the first movement of Hovhaness’s Con certo for Harp op. 267 (1973). Notice the unison melodies played in the strings above the modal harp melismas.

\(^{104}\) Shirodkar.
Hovhaness and the Harp: Three Musical Analyses

Upon Enchanted Ground

In the 1950s, Hovhaness’s Armenian outlook was gradually being replaced by his growing interest in musical representations of Indian tala and Hindu/Buddhist cosmology. The use of the harp, alongside percussion, greatly increased in this third period and played a key role in the further revision and expansion of Hovhaness’s cyclical, modal, harmonic, and senza misura compositional schemes. Upon Enchanted Ground op. 90/1, composed for flute, cello, harp, and tam-tam, is a model of Hovhaness’s hybridized Eastern and Western musical styles and formal techniques. The piece was written in 1951 around the time of Hovhaness’s String Quartet No. 2 op. 147, which features the previously mentioned fifth movement, “Gamelan in Sosi Style.”

A brief four minutes in length, Upon Enchanted Ground is a sophisticated piece in which Hovhaness has created an innovative instrumental formal dialogue through neomodal, fugue-like entrances and contrapuntal activity.

Upon Enchanted Ground begins with a nine-measure trance-like duet between the harp and flute in 7/4 time that serves as an introduction. The harp, in D Dorian mode, has a steady flow of consonant and dissonant dyads of perfect 4ths, minor 2nds, perfect 5ths, and minor 7ths. These intervals sound completely unrelated to the florid flute melody above. Hovhaness had an appreciation for chromatic and diatonic passing motion, and this preference appears in the first two entrances of the flute phrases. The melodic phrasing of the flute creates brief moments of dissonance against the harp, then instantly resolves to a consonance by a half step. As an

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105 One account suggests that String Quartet No. 2 was completed in June of 1952 and the other states 1950. The piece originally had seven movements but is more commonly played as a suite, which incorporates three of the original movements: I. “Gamelan in Sosi Style” (originally the fifth movement); II. “Spirit Murmur” (originally the first movement); III. “Hymn” (originally the seventh movement).
example, in the second measure, the flute enters on a C against the harp’s D, and in m. 3 the flute enters on a chromatic D-flat against the harp’s D. The instruments cross musical lines, as if meandering, creating an air of mystery and contemplative mysticism.

This introduction strongly resembles the opening phrase of a *gendhing* (a composition for Javanese gamelan). Called the *bukå*, this introductory material often quotes the phrases or pitches that will appear at the end of Javanese *gongan* (formal structure delineated by the strike of the *gong ageng*). This introduction can adapt melodies from the main body of the piece through rhythmic manipulation, octave displacement, or presenting pitches in a different instrument. From this perspective, Hovhaness places an important C, B, C motive in the flute entrance at m. 2 and directly quotes the first measure of the harp’s melody at m. 10. The flute is foreshadowing the motives, intervals, and melodies that are to form the structural skeleton (*balungan*) of the entire work (see fig. 5.1).

**Figure 5.1. Upon Enchanted Ground, mm. 1-4, *bukå*-inspired introduction with important C, B, C motive in the flute.**

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107 It is crucial to mention that the *balungan* (underlying melody) in traditional Javanese compositions is rarely realized in a single instrument and is often translated (and sometimes even implied) by several players across different octaves. As for the introduction, Hovhaness also breaks from traditional *bukå* practice by choosing a slower tempo that does not set the tempo for the rest of the piece.
The section at m.10 begins with the harp presenting an animated broken melody, featuring the tonic pitch, in the style of an exciting *jhala* section in a North Indian raga. (*Jhala* means “sparkling,” and in North Indian music this effect is created on the sitar through the fast-paced alternation of the melody on the main strings against the tonic pitched *chikari* string.) The *jhala*-like melodic section in the solo harp at m. 10 can be heard as one melodic line (the upper notes) being interrupted by single, lower statements of the tonic, similar to the *chikari* string (see fig. 5.2).

![Image](image.png)

Figure. 5.2. *Upon Enchanted Ground*, mm. 10-11, *jhala*-like melodic treatment in the harp solo.

Occurring nine times throughout the entire piece, this section simulates a repeating musical juncture or “pausing point” and serves to temporarily suspend any harmonic or melodic motion. The second appearance of the harp’s pausing point in m.16 is further accompanied by the first strike of the tam-tam. This section is regularly followed by the recurring C, B, C motive in the harp that functions as the start of each quasi-cycle throughout the piece. The number of beats in each phrase of the harp is irregular (hence the label “quasi-cycle”) and does not strictly conform to Javanese traditional *gongan* structures that appear in groups of cyclical beat patterns in powers of four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two, etc. In a sense, Hovhaness creates his own style of cyclicism in which circular patterns maintain their individual shapes and follow their own planetary orbits.

The converging of the independent flute, harp, and cello lines in *Upon Enchanted Ground* is rare and does not strictly conform to traditional aspects of Javanese *gongan*. However,
the contrapuntal nature of the lines reflect the melodic, linear construction of Javanese melodies. The Javanese conception of end-weightiness due to arrival points on the last beat of a melodic unit contradicts the Western classical notion of the first beat as the strongest arrival point of the phrase. Hovhaness exploits this metrically ambiguous spirit by placing the lines of the harp and tam-tam, with the later addition of the flute and cello, within the constraints of Western bar lines but purposely avoids any sense of strong or weak beats through syncopation. This compositional practice removes any sense of metrical hierarchy and portrays the melody as if unfolding on a linear plane (rather than a vertical, harmonic plane). Hovhaness has extracted elements from both Western and Javanese melodic structural practices and created his own hybridized compositional stratagem (see fig. 5.3).

Additionally, if the tonic and 5th notes are removed, the harp part in mm.10-14 resembles traditional Javanese melodic character in its step-wise, unfolding exploration of the mode before arriving at the tonic “pausing point.” This sectional pattern occurs regularly throughout the piece in mm. 14, 22, 46, and so forth.

Figure 5.3. *Upon Enchanted Ground*, mm. 10-20, step-wise harp melody.

The flute entrance at the third section (m. 42) and cello entrance at m. 57 contribute to the texture by adding their own independent melodic lines to enhance the controlled chaos. The

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108 In one circumstance in particular, the Javanese think vertically—at important structural units, when all elaborating, structural, and balungan instruments arrive together on one particular point, called séléh, which means ‘settle’ or ‘come to rest’. Pickvance, 29.
increased stratification of more and more instruments, like a snowball rolling down a hill, creates the effect of a built-in grand crescendo without the need for dynamic adaptation. In fact, except for the *mp* marking at the start of the Allegro section in m. 10, the only dynamics indicated by the composer refer to the *p* or *mf* strike of the tam-tam. Hovhaness gradually builds dynamic intensity through instrumental density, an effect regularly used in Indonesian gamelan practice.

*The Flowering Peach*

Composed in 1954 for a theatrical play by Clifford Odets, *The Flowering Peach* op. 124, is another example of Hovhaness’s contemplative musical style. The suite was derived from movements in the stage production, which premiered at the Belasco Theater in New York and is a serio-comic depiction of the biblical story of Noah’s Ark. The piece is scored for E-flat Alto Saxophone (representing Noah), B-flat clarinet, vibraphone, glockenspiel, celesta, tam-tam, timpani, and harp or piano. It has seven movements, including one double-movement, titled: I. “Overture,” IIa. “Lifting Voices,” IIb. “Building the Ark,” III. “Intermezzo,” IV. “Rain,” V. “Love Song,” VI. “Sun and Moon,” and VII. “Rainbow Hymn.”

The incidental music for the suite resembles the sparse musical textures of the early central European serial school, such as those heard in compositions by Anton Webern and Alban Berg, and is largely uncharacteristic of Hovhaness’s previous output before the 1950s. Hovhaness described the techniques he applied in this new musical territory as “points of sound”

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109 The play opened on Broadway on December 28, 1954, and included all scenes except the “Sun and Moon” section, which was deleted before the first performance. Alan Hovhaness, *The Flowering Peach: Music for the Play by Clifford Odets*, Score (New York: Associated Music Publishers, Inc., 1955).

110 Rosner, 19.
or “scattered sounds” and originally added taped sounds in the play to symbolize the “Voice or Presence of God” and “a Mouse.”

In six of the seven movements in The Flowering Peach the harp plays a functional and supportive role. Cleverly woven into the work’s atmospheric texture and harp part are juxtapositions of Southeast Asian philosophical and spiritual metaphors, cyclical patterns, Javanese gongan-like structures, and regular aural imitations of the gong ageng. While Eastern musical influences can be found in all movements, the most notable that express elements of Indonesian gamelan are the third movement, “Intermezzo,” and the fourth movement, “Rain.”

In “Intermezzo” Hovhaness employs the cyclical passages and modal scales that marked his Armenian period in the latter 1940s, yet he also ventures into the Eastern-influenced atmospheric realm of incidental music. The Javanese gamelan is not physically present in this work; however, Hovhaness’s compositional techniques, whether intentional or not, allude to general aspects of gamelan rhythmic patterns and aural archetypes. In particular, the glockenspiel plays patterns of repeated sixteenth notes above a thin, cyclical harp accompaniment. This pattern aurally and rhythmically resembles the characteristic patterns and piercing resonance of the Javanese saron panerus, a higher-pitched instrument that plays above and according to the highly punctuated colotomic patterns of the kempul and gong ageng (which are portrayed by the harp accompaniment). In traditional Javanese gamelan compositions (gendhing), the saron panerus engages in pekingan (double-density playing, a.k.a. more notes per metrical unit). The aural result is an increase in rhythmic and melodic density, giving the impression that the notes in the saron panerus are moving at twice the speed of the stylized balungan (see fig. 5.4).

111 Ibid., 304.

112 The harp is absent from movement IIb. “Building the Ark.”
The cyclic, *gongan*-like patterns in the harp and vibraphone parts are worthy of closer study. The vibraphone takes the lead presenting a twelve-note cycle that occurs every seven eighth-note beats. Starting on the downbeat of section K, m. 22, the harp plays a major 2nd (B-flat against a C), a perfect 5th (G-flat against a D-flat), another major 2nd (A-flat against a G-flat), and finally a perfect 4th (C against an F). These alternating consonant and dissonant intervals are followed by an octave F in the lowest and most resonant bass wires of the instrument. Similar to colotomic pattern structure and Javanese *gongan*, this highly resonant gong-like attack reoccurs every ten rhythmic beats for nine cycles. To reiterate, Javanese musical phrase structures have an end-weighted approach. Therefore, the pluck of the F simultaneously signifies the final note (played by the *gong ageng*) of the cyclical phrase. In the manner of the previously mentioned “planetary orbits,” the harp’s independent pattern crosses over bar lines and is melodically, stylistically, and rhythmically separate from the alto saxophone, vibraphone, and tam-tam’s musical material (see fig. 5.5).
Figure 5.5. *The Flowering Peach*, “Intermezzo,” mm. 21-24, gongan-like cyclical patterns in the octaves of the harp.

The programmatic fourth movement, “Rain,” portrays a similar cyclical pattern in the harp and uses the combination of harmonics in the right hand and an enharmonic trill in the left hand to create the illusion of a single repeated pitch. This figure is intended to mimic the relentless drops of rain and does not cease for the entire movement. In Javanese *gendhing*, to generalize, the practice of halting any melodic progression (the *balungan*) and standing on a single note for an extended period of time is called *gâtrå gantungan*, which stems from the word *gantung* (to hang). This practice suspends a melodic unit and varies between instruments. The left hand of the harp uses this effect throughout, and in the right hand, the bell-like harmonics create a recurring pattern that follows the downward descent: G, F-sharp, E, D, C-flat (see fig. 5.6). This harp figure starts in m. 2 and is completely independent of the other instruments.
(glockenspiel and timpani), cycling a total of four times before it reaches a repeat sign to signal a return to the start of m. 2.

Figure 5.6. *The Flowering Peach*, “Rain,” mm. 2-6, cyclical pattern in the harp’s right-hand harmonics.

*Island of Mysterious Bells*

A vast majority of the technical and stylistic aspects of Hovhaness’s fourth period are represented in his single work for harp ensemble titled *Island of Mysterious Bells* op. 244. This harp quartet was finished on October 6, 1971, when Hovhaness was living in Seattle, Washington. With the composer in attendance, this work was performed by the University of Washington Harp Ensemble, directed by Pamela Vokolek, at the Eleventh National Conference of the American Harp Society in Seattle, Washington, held from June 26-29, 1974.
Island of Mysterious Bells is a progressive, programmatic work that consists of eight brief movements titled: I. Andante Espressivo, II. Allegro Moderato, III. Largo Maestoso, IV. Allegro Moderato, V. Allegro, VI. “Island of Blessedness,” VII. Allegretto, and VIII. Andante Espressivo. Each harp part has its own personality and contains independent material throughout. These individual parts are creatively layered or juxtaposed through the use of canon and fugue-like formulas and regularly create the aural illusion of controlled chaos.

These canonic and fugal techniques and formulas are recurring practices in both early and late Hovhaness compositions. The stratification of independent lines is a common structural element in Javanese gendhing that Hovhaness likely derived from his generalist studies of Eastern music. In the first Andante Espressivo movement, for example, Hovhaness layers

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multiple keys on top of one another to create interesting moments of polytonality and tonal complexity.

In a general overview of the harp parts, Harp 1, symbolic of the resonating bells, characteristically plays the melody in unison broken octaves in each hand. Harp 1’s melodic character changes when full movements are presented in imitation such as the canons in movement II, IV, VII, and the quasi-fugue in movement V. Hovhaness does not clearly indicate which movements are to be played *attacca* in the score except at the end of the fourth movement, where he specifically indicates “continue” in all parts. In performance, it is safe to assume that, based upon the lack of a fermata and the unmeasured continuation of Harp 4’s “rapid murmur” in movements I, II, IV, and VII, all parts are played *attacca* and brief pauses are required after movements III, V, and VI.

The fugue and canon-like movements are *senza misura* and do not entirely conform to the characteristics of a traditional Western fugue or canon. Within these movements, like the rapid strumming of a Japanese *koto* or Chinese *guzheng*, Hovhaness requires that Harp 4 (except in movement IV and V) provides soft yet swift arpeggiations of five-note patterns or trills to create a “rapid murmur.” Called *bisbigliandos*, according to Hovhaness himself, these swiftly rolled clusters of pitches or chords are intended to sound “like a magical vibration” beneath the imitative and canonic parts of Harp 2, 3, and 4 (see fig. 5.8). In fact, Hovhaness’s sophisticated application of these explorative, aleatoric techniques greatly impressed composers such as Lou Harrison and John Cage, who became close friends and avid supporters of his music.\footnote{Lary Rother, “A Composer Echoes in Unexpected Places,” *The New York Times* (November 4, 2011), under “Music,” http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/06/arts/music/american-mystic-marks-alan-hovhaness-centennial.html?_r=0 (accessed February 16, 2016).}
Hovhaness also includes pedal slides in movements II, IV, and VII to mimic the microtonality and bending of pitches in Eastern string and wind instruments such as the Japanese shakuhachi (wooden flute) or Javanese rebab (two-string fiddle). These figures are intended to create a distant and unpredictable air of mystery that characterizes Hovhaness’s metaphorical “island of mysterious bells.” Recalling his familiarity with Asian mysticism, Hovhaness likely intends this piece to be both a meditative and contemplative exploration of sound and musical color rather than a catchy novelty (see fig. 5.9).
Imitative polyphony forms the underlying basis of these movements and a distinguishable melody can only be extracted from movements, I, III, VI, and VIII. However, set apart from the rest, movement VI, “Island of Blessedness,” relates to Indonesian colotomic patterns and is worthy of further study. Hovhaness employs the lower bass wires of Harp 3 and Harp 4 to imitate the resonant character of structured *kempul* and *gong ageng* strikes. Javanese *gongan* follow strict rhythmic beat patterns that layer and symmetrically intermingle individual lines on top of one another. In this regard, Harp 3 plays an octave every five beats while Harp 4 plays an octave every seven beats. Interestingly, this use of the number seven and five was flipped in movement III, and Harp 3 plays patterns of seven while Harp 4 plays patterns of five.

Of interest here, the spiritual and metaphorical importance of the number seven appears in many religious traditions, two of which Hovhaness would have been exposed to in his early years with di Giovanni and in his travels to the Orient. In the ancient Indian religions, for example, there is a Hindu god of fire, called Agni. Carried throughout the sky by a chariot pulled...
by seven horses, this god has seven sisters, mothers, and wives, and seven tongues of flames. In the Buddhist tradition, especially when studying the birth narrative of the Buddha, the young infant took seven steps after his birth leaving footprints that shone like seven stars. His mother died seven days after his birth. In the Buddha’s lifetime he sought salvation for a period of seven years and circled the enlightenment tree (Bodhi) seven times. Further, in the practice of Buddhism the Buddhist paradise is composed of seven levels and seven good deeds can help to bring good *karma* in a believer’s life.

In *Island of Mysterious Bells*, Hovhaness coincidentally includes the number seven in these cycles and uses the meter of 7/4 for the entire first movement (see fig. 5.10). In other works he uses the number seven as well, such as the 7/4 meter in *Upon Enchanted Ground* and the seven movements of *The Flowering Peach*.

![Figure 5.10. Island of Mysterious Bells, “Island of Blessedness,” mm. 4-6, colotomic five- and seven-beat kempul/gong-like punctuations in Harp 3 (5 beats) and Harp IV (7 beats).](image-url)
Conclusion

Through the medium of Western classical music, Hovhaness was able to express a duality between the East and West that corresponded to his appreciation of non-Western musical practices, spiritual attachments to nature, and his own Asian-inspired philosophical understandings of man’s purpose in the universe. As was discovered in the chamber works for harp, *Upon Enchanted Ground*, *The Flowering Peach*, and *Island of Mysterious Bells*, Hovhaness’s seamless Eastern and Western musical hybridizations are complex, yet aurally simple. The music is continuous and almost chaotic but cleverly held together by individual quasi-cyclical personalities in each instrument.

To summarize, Hovhaness was able to convey a reflective yet approachable musical atmosphere through modal counterpoint, large and small repeated melodic and rhythmic figurations, broad waves of subtle dynamic variation, and suspended sonorities. The concept of cyclism finds its roots in Hindu and Buddhist cosmology and is recreated by Hovhaness in a Western context through repetitions of independent, large or small melodic and rhythmic patterns. Hovhaness’s cyclical treatment of melodic material constructs autonomous layers of contrasting instruments and tends to ignore standard meters through patterns that cross over bar lines. These layers function to create unexpected timbres and expansions and contractions of textural density.

Cyclical patterns are commonly expressed by Hovhaness as a melodic unit, single pitch, or percussive punctuating gesture in the manner of a gong or single xylophone strike. Rhythmic motives and multiple melodic gestures are further employed to recreate sections of Southeast Asian inspired colotomic patterns. Hovhaness colorfully contrasts these sections with chordal harmony, intricate melodies, and rhythmless *senza misura* passages that give the illusion of
improvised, yet controlled, chaos. Many of these formal devices were further developed later in his career, especially in compositions that include the harp.

In his writing for harp and other instruments, it is not completely clear whether Hovhaness intentionally aimed to imitate gamelan musical style or if his ideas simply happened to coincide with Indonesian practices by association. Hovhaness mimics the spirit of Javanese melodic construction in the harp through the avoidance of downbeats, elision of independent instrumental lines, gongan-like structures, and step-wise melodies. I postulate that after Hovhaness’s years of study in non-Western music traditions, familiarity with Eastern spiritual philosophies, and his many pieces that refer to the gamelan in their titles and musical styles, the gamelan was indeed one of his many Asian muses.

Appreciation and recognition of his work by music scholars has been a slow, yet steady process. Shirodkar describes him as a “trend-setting pioneer…[who] predated not only similar techniques of Lutoslawski and Ligeti in the 1960s, but also the ‘indeterminacy’ explorations of [his] friend John Cage.” Shirodkar claims that Hovhaness’s compositional style foreshadowed ideas and practices that came to define the minimalist ‘school’ of the 1960s, which included composers such as Terry Riley, Philip Glass, and Steve Reich.115

However, Hovhaness, like his orientalist predecessors, is sometimes accused by ethnomusicologists and musicologists of creating superficial representations of complex Eastern art forms. As is common with Southeast Asian and Indian musical elements influenced by a Western perspective, over-used compositional techniques (such as augmented and pentatonic

scales) can easily be viewed as merely a Western interpretation of Eastern music. The exploitation of the world-music genre during the 1960s and 70s jaded many Western classical musicians and composers and was seen as an easily producible cliché in the American popular-music scene. Thus, it is possible that any disparagement of Hovhaness’s works may have been written as a negative response to the fusions that stemmed from the African and Indian music revival of the 1960s and 1970s, such as music by Ravi Shankar and the Beatles.

The many criticisms miss the point of what writing music truly meant to him as a composer. Scholars, performers, and listeners must keep in mind that the Eastern philosophy of music practice and performance often functions as a means for reflection and meditation. To return to Javanese musical philosophy, the journey to the musical destination (referring to the gong ageng) is more valuable than the final result. The challenge of writing vast quantities of music for anyone and everyone was an exercise in self-reflection and self-denial for Hovhaness, not simply a means in which to gain prestige or money. The journey to discover new sounds, new idioms, new melodies was therapeutic for the composer. It was a chance for Hovhaness to explore his inner qualities and is therefore directly correlated with the Eastern spiritual worldviews presented by di Giovanni many decades earlier.

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116 Hovhaness commented in the Duffie interview, “But then I got the idea of starting my own amateur orchestra, which I did, and so I gave concerts every year. Those were very successful. I even made money. I did them for charity during the war. But then we even made extra money, so I had enough to help towards the next concert...I wasn’t trying to make money for myself, but I was glad to be able to conduct concerts of my music.”
In an interview with Duffie, Hovhaness discusses his organic approach to composition,

**BD:** Many of the other symphonies have titles. Are they forethoughts or afterthoughts?

**AH:** Almost always afterthoughts. I compose music without any thought at all. I just compose the music and I don't know what it's going to be, as far as any other connections are concerned.

**BD:** So when you start a piece, you have no idea what it's going to be like at the end?

**AH:** Well, sometimes I have an idea of the ending, yes. The beginning and the ending, and the middle. One has a kind of vision of the whole thing, very fast, and then you work it out. It may change in all kinds of ways, when you're working. It may write itself.

**BD:** So there are times when you don't have any control over it.

**AH:** No, not really. I guess I don't, and yet I do. It's hard to say. If I'm writing in a classical form, like my Third Symphony [Symphony No. 3 op. 148 (1956)], then I write in sonata form. But in other cases the form grows from its own ideas. And I may use fugue forms. I have a certain concept of the fugue. It's one of the great forms in music, one of the most perfect. It can say many different things, but what it says, I don't know. I can't think of it in terms of words or visual terms. Music is a sort of law in itself. So I find a title that is suitable afterwards.

In closing, Hovhaness was not interested in popular musical trends or in appealing to Western classical fixed forms. He chose to focus on his own sophisticated understanding of what music should mean and how it should sound, especially in his use of the harp. By fusing Western classical forms and timbres with Eastern musical elements and philosophies, Hovhaness was able to forge a medium in which he could achieve a strong sense of balance and inner calm between two separate entities. Hovhaness’s interests in natural elements, celestial bodies, and Eastern philosophies, and ultimately his abrupt changes in compositional style from period to period and piece to piece were seemingly a result of his ardent desire for spiritual satisfaction and understanding. Hovhaness viewed instruments and their personalities, especially the harp, as

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117 In an interview with Rosner, Hovhaness admitted that in his early years he regularly experienced “a strange feeling of oneness with people remote in time and place, and a consciousness of being at once in New England and simultaneously in some distant Asian locale.” Rosner, 5.

118 Ibid.
separate celestial bodies rotating in their own manner throughout space.\textsuperscript{119} In this manner, through music, Hovhaness was able to challenge the notion of musical authenticity and sought to decipher and express the duality between the East and West within himself, his spiritual attachments to nature, and his cosmic understandings of man’s purpose in the universe.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 17.
Chapter 6
Definitions and Issues of Authenticity in World Music: Realizing Bill Alves’s *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan*

It is as though the world is a round continuum of music. Perhaps here a particular kind of expression is at its most intense and perfect. Then by gradual and geographic degrees we move to some other center with a special expression. Anywhere on the planet we may do this—always by insensible degrees the music changes, and always the music is a compound, a hybrid of collected virtues. This whole round living world of music—the Human Music—roused and delights me, it stirs me to a "transethnic," a planetary music.\(^\text{120}\)

—Lou Harrison, *Music Primer*

**Concerns about the Issue of Musical “Authenticity”**

In a complex musical world shaped by ongoing cultural interactions, finding reasonable solutions to the controversial questions that emerge when evaluating musical authenticity requires persistence and skill. The pursuit of ethnically sensitive definitions and generalizations is further challenged by individual experiences both inside and outside the realm of music. The composers discussed in the previous chapters, Bill Alves, Lou Harrison, and Alan Hovhaness, created hybridized works that may be found to exist along multiple points of an ambiguous continuum of musical authenticity (see Chapter 1). In the case of world music, the reception, assessment of musical value, and subsequent acceptance or denial of music influenced by performance practices outside the Western classical canon are subject to the nature of listeners’ highly personalized aesthetic preferences.

Art music in particular, throughout history and into the twenty-first century, has been cultivated by royal courts, the aristocracy, skilled performers, and established educational...

institutions such as conservatories and universities. Anthropologists have noted differences between art music and folk music in the same manner that they have made distinctions between “cultivated” and “uncultivated” cultural and social behavior. This potentially controversial division pertains to social and structural factors, such as class and location, by contrasting practices among rural or urban centers, peasant or aristocratic classes, and most importantly, amateurism versus professionalism.

An enlightened approach to the study of authenticity and hybridization within non-Western traditions has revealed that influences of globalization through technology have intermittently ingrained trends of differentiation (“self” and “other”) into modern society. Amplified modes of cultural mixture have led scholars to take the position that categorizing a vast array of world-music genres, each affected by its own cultural intersections, is a futile endeavor that causes more ambiguity than clarification. In fact, this opinion is further supported when it is known that performers of the music in question do not articulate these categories in the first place.

In a case study conducted in collegiate world-music classrooms over the course of eight years, ethnomusicologist Sarah Weiss sheds light upon the reception and categorization of world music. She states,

“Perceived authenticity” is a primary determinant of the valuation of world musics. Marketers may exploit listeners’ perceptions, but understanding that authenticity is more malleable and cyclic than its definition suggests reveals the complicated nexus of category boundaries, audience expectation, and the hybridizing processes of cultural interaction.122

121 For further study on philosophical concepts related to the nature of variation and modification see Gilles Deleuze, Differences and Repetition, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

The constant debate between musical authenticity and hybridity is further fueled by the repercussions and long-lasting effects of the use of the term “world music” in popular culture. Lay listeners, according to what Weiss discovered in her study of college students, are often completely unaware that the world-music genres they assume as “authentic” or “pure” are already hybrids. It is not fruitful to place blame for this phenomenon, but it is possible to trace its origins. According to Australian scholar Tony Mitchell, the term “world music” was created in 1987 as a marketing tag for use by several independent record labels throughout Europe and America. World music referred to a category of popular music that exposed privileged Western audiences to new “sonic adventures” and an unfamiliar sense of “otherness.”

The promotion of albums under the world-music category exploited vastly diverse genres of music and conveyed a sense of exoticism and mystery to Western listeners. The drive to “fetishize” non-Western popular genres gave rise to a surge in world-music albums that further muddled traditional settings of ethnic musical purity and style.

Critics have claimed that the enthusiasm that emerged from the development of the world-music identifier was a direct result of a stagnant 1980s popular and rock music scene where musicians and listeners had become bored by Western limitations in form and instrumentation. Called “musical tourism,” non-Western aspects of microtonality, unfamiliar instrumentations, and modes of improvisation all offered new musical mediums and materials through which Western composers could express themselves. To the dismay of ethnomusicologists and anthropologists, a shallow sense of collective enthusiasm for non-

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124 Ibid., 318.
Western music over the course of several decades led to overly generalized and misinterpreted perspectives on hybridity and authenticity in popular culture.

Weiss moves deeper into this dialogue with her explorations concerning listener reception of hybridized world music and its long-term effects on the displacement and adaptation of traditional cultural boundaries. Weiss claims,

Different minds receive different ideas. These multivalent occurrences are precisely the most pleasurable and most confounding elements of performances in which there is cultural mixture, especially when we find ourselves forgetting that what we observe is a matrix of cultural juxtaposition, and we stop forming a mental taxonomy of constituent parts and begin to believe in—lose our distance from—the hybrid performance we experience.  

Weiss concludes that, when performers and audience members are pleased by the outcome of a piece of music that draws its cultural origins from multiple Western or non-Western sources, an inadvertent disregard for the individual hybridized features emerges. The work is viewed as a single entity defined by a single genre rather than a melding of divergent musical parts. As a result, aesthetic appreciation by the larger majority, or by those in social or political power, then forms the basis upon which traditions are derived and further expressed over time.

In 1969, Indian music scholar Raymond Reis described tradition as “a normative way to indicate what should be included or excluded as a type of musical composition, and what behavior is appropriate or inappropriate for a musician.” He continued, “There is a sense of an unarticulated ‘common understanding’ of what constitutes tradition.” Reis claimed that cultures and their associated performance practices are synthetic and constantly in a state of

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evolution shaped by shifting ideas and expectations. The adoption and integration of musical tradition can be a short-term or long-term process and is dependent on the potency of its impact on a particular society. Tradition can then be defined as the culmination of recurring cultural practices that are adopted and expressed through a common cultural consensus of ideas and expectations over time.

In music, this outcome of collective consensus continues to bring us back to the difficult task of defining authenticity. If the mutual understanding and appreciation by members of a particular society allow for the adoption of stylistic or formal music practices derived from multiple cultural sources, does this fact then supersede distinctions between what is implied by the music identifiers “folk” or “classical,” “urban” or “rural,” “authentic” or “inauthentic?”

**Reflections on Recreating Alves’s *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan* and Authenticity**

Bill Alves’s *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan* is an unprecedented hybridization of and valuable addition to world music, and it effectively blends Western musical elements and forms with traditional musical patterns and instruments of the Indonesian gamelan.\(^{127}\) Recreating this major work required a series of adjustments and compromises in order to adapt, yet preserve, the original intent of the composer and to remain as close as possible to current gamelan practices in the East and West. The sections that follow describe my post-performance comparisons and reflections concerning the harp concerto and provide insight into how this particular re-creation held true to or ventured from traditional gamelan practices.

\(^{127}\) I have come to loosely define “world music” as human-made, organized sound influenced by or in-part derived from past and current non-Western music traditions and performance practices. This general definition implies the inclusion of hybridized popular, folk, and art-music genres.
Tuning

All musical cultures employ the use of particular musical parameters that help to differentiate their own from other music traditions. For instance, various standards in tuning are set by the larger musical community as a whole. The Western classical tradition, for example, aims for a standard of A=440 Hertz. In contrast, there is no precise Hertz number, and standardization is uncharacteristic, in the Indonesian gamelan tradition. Traditional gamelan tuning can be better realized as a set of goals, rather than pitch standards, and has a vast range of interpretations within two basic tuning systems.

Tuning systems are further dictated by the number of divisions in one octave as well as the size of the interval between those divisions. As discussed in previous chapters, one gamelan tuning system is called sléndro and the second, pélog. These tuning systems are represented by their own melodic instruments within the ensemble, and in general, no melodic instrument except the rebab (a bowed string instrument), sulung (wooden flute), and human voice can produce tones from both scales. The purpose of having two different scales has its roots in spiritual, ritualistic, and historical meaning. The sléndro scale is a pentatonic scale of unequal but slightly similar intervals and is considered by the Javanese to be the more ancient of the two. The heptatonic pélog scale is considered to be a more current development. The term pélog is said to be derived from the Javanese word ‘pelag,’ which translates to “fine” or “beautiful.”

In comparison with the rigidity of Western scales, the Javanese view sléndro and pélog scales more as a set of guidelines for intervals rather than as exact frequencies. The tuning of every traditional gamelan will vary slightly from one to the next, but all will be rooted in these two tuning systems. There is no precise octave equivalence, such as a 2:1 frequency ratio, that can easily work with the Western tuning of octaves. Fixed-pitch instruments, such as saron,
bonang panerus, and gender barung, have less flexibility in pitch compared to the voice, suling, and rebab, which can purposely bend the pitch in order to add expressiveness to melodic lines.

Current Western popular-music traditions engage in similar practices in order to add personal expression and tonal variety to a melody. In his study examining illusions of authenticity in Western compositions influenced by gamelan music, Neil Sorrell describes a “rubato’ of intonation.” He explains that “although we have mathematical guidelines and strongly held ideas of what constitutes ‘in-tuneness’ and ‘out-of-tuneness,’ in practice our culture follows others in its allowance—even positive encouragement—of expressive tendencies.”

In general, the Western classical tradition strives for standardization of intonation through equal temperament where the intervallic distance between each of the twelve divisions of the octave is the same. Equal temperament combined with the inherent elasticity in tuning from one gamelan to the next (embat), or even within the variations in intervallic structure between one instrument and another, can create difficulties when writing compositions for Western instruments and gamelan. Sorrell communicated this dilemma in his evaluation of issues of pastiche in gamelan-inspired composition. In a discussion of tuning he states,

Not only is this an emblematic part of gamelan music’s sonic signature for suitably aware listeners, both Indonesian and Western, and pinpoints a crucial difference between Java and the West, but it also forces the composer [and performer] to make a difficult choice when negotiating that difference through the combination of extraneous instruments or voices with the gamelan.

As described in detail in Chapter 3, Bill Alves’s Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan was written for the Harvey Mudd College brass gamelan, which was specially tuned by


129 Ibid., 32.
the maker to reflect a scale with just intonation.\textsuperscript{130} This type of tuning and building material is not common in Java but allowed Alves to create Western classical works on an instrument that does not easily lose its pitch over time (as is the case with bronze gamelan that need regular maintenance). Alves requested that his gamelan be tuned absolutely “beatless” (called \textit{tampa ombak}) in order to avoid unequal octaves. Also called \textit{pleng}, equal octaves are not considered desirable by the Javanese because of their flat and lifeless nature. Traditional gamelan players and tuners favor a more shimmery tuning employing octaves that are compressed or expanded.\textsuperscript{131}

In an article titled “\textit{Pleng}: Composed for a Justly Tuned Gender Barung,” Alves explains his compositional strategies as well as his methodology for choosing to create a non-traditional gamelan set.

When I decided to write for traditional Indonesian instruments, I faced the familiar problem of how to integrate these instruments, clearly designed for another type of music, with my own basically Western compositional heritage. At the one extreme of possible solutions, there are those, such as John Cage, who basically use the instruments the way that they would use any potential sound source. These composers may be interested in the sounds themselves and not particularly in the music of the Indonesian culture who produced the instruments. Certainly there is nothing wrong with this approach, and, after all, I have studied Western composition for many years and Javanese composition, by comparison, hardly at all.\textsuperscript{132}

My re-creation of the harp concerto in February of 2015 used a traditionally tuned Javanese gamelan out of necessity. The gamelan, located at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, was not tuned to the just temperament that had been used in the first performance of the

\textsuperscript{130} Alves designated “American Gamelan” in the title to signify the unusual nature of the tuning and melodic style that characterized the piece.

\textsuperscript{131} Alves adds, “In fact, this tuning is the simplest superparticular pentatonic, and this set of intervals (though in a different order) has been used by Lou Harrison in his gamelan \textit{Si Darius} and in the third movement of his work for orchestra and chorus \textit{Four Strict Songs}.” From Bill Alves, “\textit{Pleng}: Composed for a Justly Tuned Gender Barung,” http://pages.hmc.edu/alves/pleng.html (accessed May 6, 2016).

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
Alves concerto more than a decade earlier in 2004. Therefore, we had decisions and adjustments to make. In the first rehearsal, my assumption that a direct tuning of the harp to various fixed-pitch instruments of the gamelan would not cause too many discrepancies was instantly challenged and quickly abandoned. That tuning might have been quite pleasing to a traditional Javanese player but the piece sounded nothing like the recording from the first performance. The contour of the harp melody in particular was unrecognizable and was not melodically aligned to the original. In hindsight, this realization would have been obvious to trained ethnomusicologists and Indonesian scholars, but to a performer, with only a surface-level understanding of gamelan tuning, the result was quite jarring.

After a period of trial and error, I resolved to make subtle modifications to the pitches of the harp in an attempt to both partially match the harp soloist on the original recording as well as the pitches of the Javanese instruments. Adapting the harp to blend with the gamelan pitches (borrowed from both sléndro and pélog scales) and to reflect the original recording required experimentation. The goal was to find the “perfect” blend of Western and Eastern pitches in order to ensure that the overall intervallic contour of the work was preserved and still recognizable.

Fortunately, and to my surprise, the overall presentation and mixture of tunings was quite pleasing to both players and the audience. The “hybrid” tuning of the harp blended smoothly into the overtones of the resonating instruments and clash of sonorities rarely occurred. The tuning of the harp incorporated equal octaves throughout the entire range of the instrument in the solo part,
which was important in order to preserve the harp solo melody that required pitches C, G, and E in both hands.\textsuperscript{133}

**Musical Function and Performance Space**

In Java, theatre, music, and dance are not intended to serve as vehicles of personal expression. Gamelan music, for example, is ritualistic and the performer serves as the vehicle through which music flows and is expressed. The very act of performing a concerto in the Western classical tradition contradicts this perspective of communal expression and sets the performer apart from the other players. Additionally, Indonesian gamelan players are also capable of switching musical roles from one instrument to another. In the case of the February 2015 concerto performance, time constraints and the musical ability of the Western players on gamelan instruments, made switching instruments impossible. For instance, as the harp soloist in this concerto, I am quite familiar with the gamelan accompanimental part in each instrument and have experience playing the particular gamelan instruments that are required for the concerto. Despite my familiarity, it would still have taken a great deal of time and intensive study to perfect each individual part for each instrument.

Further, because of the difficulty of the harp part, it would have taken an even greater amount of time to train another player to learn the harp part, let alone teach the slenthem player switching to the bonang barung, for instance. To Western musicians, this ability to play every instrument in the orchestra sounds ridiculous but to traditional Javanese gamelan players it is expected. Original Javanese compositions are merely frameworks of what is heard in performance. The general skeleton of the piece is all that is provided and players are able to work out each instrument’s respective patterns onto that framework without having to have each note

\textsuperscript{133} See Appendix B: Pitch and Tuning Correlations for the precise tunings in the harp and Earlham College gamelan.
dictated. As a Western piece inspired by gamelan practices, Alves did not intend this piece to function in this traditional manner, and each player is assumed to master and perfect his or her own assigned instrument.

In Java, gamelan music is performed in a wide variety of settings, such as at a royal court or in private homes, and is generally used for entertainment, sacred ceremonies, and commemorations of important events such as the birth of a new child or the opening of a new business. Performances can be lengthy. (Wayang theater performances in particular can last for hours with multiple pieces that are strung together over the course of an entire evening.) In most settings, the music is not actively listened to and provides a musical ambiance while individuals mingle, drink, and eat. Ethnomusicologist Benjamin Brinner describes his own experience attending a performance of gamelan music that did not include dance or theatre (called klenégan):

For the birthday klenégan, the entire tile floor had been covered with mats and the instruments of a small gamelan filled about half the room…The evening was a real musical treat as the focus was on the refined elaborations of some fine musicians, Pak Marto’s students and colleagues from the performing arts academy. The adult guests, roughly equal in number to the musicians, sat around the edges of the room, eating, chatting, and listening to the music while children played in the adjacent room.\footnote{Benjamin Brinner, \textit{Music in Central Java: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.}

The ensemble that Brinner describes is what Westerners would consider a “chamber” ensemble (gamelan gadhon) and uses quieter instruments to accommodate the more intimate performance setting. As gamelan music and ensembles became popular in the West and in university settings in the later decades of the twentieth century, the ensemble gradually made its way to the concert hall. This concerto in particular could be performed in a private residence or court setting but has been written with a Western concert hall in mind. Both Indiana
performances of this concerto took place in a concert hall in front of quiet and attentive Western listeners. This fact alone differentiates this gamelan piece from the traditional, more informal settings one normally would experience in Indonesia.

For the harpist or conductor who would like to re-create the *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan*, certain adjustments in tuning, placement of instruments on stage, and flexible rehearsal methods depending on the skill levels of the players are inevitable. Time, patience, and dedication is required in order to ensure players are comfortable with their individual parts, tempi are accurate and comfortable, and the sacred instruments are transported safely. For the performances at Ball State University and Earlham College, the harp was placed directly in front of the ensemble where all players could both hear and see the harpist. In the quieter sections, such as in the third movement, cueing was absolutely necessary at strategic points in each piece for both harpist and players. The first movement, for example, requires the harpist and *gong ageng* to land at strategic points throughout meandering, rhythmless sections. I found that I had to provide obvious head and arm gestures to ensure that the *gong ageng* player could both see me and prepare their strike.

As is expected when playing in small chamber ensembles, studying the score and listening carefully to all moving parts is essential. Since there is no drum leader required for this concerto, the ensemble is self-conducted. In my particular situation, the *slenthem* helped aurally guide where I placed my musical lines and the *bonang* parts were crucial in determining tempi and subdivisions. The *gong ageng* and *kenong* are helpful but in performance I found them difficult to hear in *tutti* sections. Confident *gong ageng* and *kenong* players who can play accurately and loudly can go a long way to help ensure that the ensemble stays together. The precise placement of downbeats and various arrival points of new sections by these players sets
the stage for all other parts. Outside of rehearsals, the gamelan players would practice with the recording while they developed their facility at the instrument and learned their parts. I, too, regularly practiced with the recording provided by Alves. Based upon my experiences in early group rehearsals, I highly recommend that all players take the time to listen to and practice with the recording before rehearsals begin.

Additionally, and most importantly, the harpist needs to make the time to determine which tunings she or he will use. Before group rehearsals began, I took my tuner, tested each instrument in the score (with the aid of the gamelan instructor to show me which pitch was which on each instrument), and drew a rough sketch of a tuning diagram for all seven pitches of the scale. This process is a great exercise in demonstrating how traditional gamelan instruments are not entirely tuned to one another. When tuning in rehearsals I referred to these rough diagrams to find a general balance between all instruments (see fig. 6.1).

Any harpist who approaches Alves’s piece will need to consider issues related to tuning and pitch distribution, available instruments, performance space, players’ skills, and their own understanding of gamelan traditions. The information provided above from my own experience rehearsing and performing the concerto hopefully will serve as a guide.
For Further Study

To date, there is only one harp-specific study that examines non-Western, Asian-focused music for the modern pedal harp. Elizabeth Ann Cox-Cabrera’s 1989 master’s thesis “Ethnic Influences in Contemporary Harp Music: Eastern and Amerindian Attributes in Selected Compositions by American Composers”\(^\text{135}\) discusses pieces that exhibit influences from Near Eastern cultures (Israeli in particular), Native American Indian cultures, and Far Eastern cultures.

Other analyses have been written by non-harpists (flutists in particular) that discuss a number of Japanese-influenced chamber works by Toru Takemitsu. Takemitsu frequently includes the harp in his chamber compositions but has been rarely discussed by harpists. Research also can be expanded to non-harp works, especially in the works of Lou Harrison, that include Western instruments that have been combined with gamelan in other chamber and/or soloistic musical atmospheres. Further, several works by Lou Harrison and Alan Hovhaness in

particular are no longer in print, and the scholarly music community likely would benefit from newly republished and edited archival works.

Other scholarship includes a study by ethnomusicologist Judith Becker, who ventures into Southeast Asia with her discussion of the Burmese harp in “The Migration of the Arched Harp from India to Burma.”136 Despite its association with Southeast Asia, this study is more folk-driven and does not focus on the modern pedal harp.

With such a paucity of material from Asian and Indonesian musical settings, it is clear that there are many untapped avenues of research into Southeastern, Southern, and Eastern influenced compositions and ethnographical studies of the modern pedal harp. Some recommendations for research include an analysis of the Japanese, koto-inspired work of Alan Hovhaness,137 evaluations of Indian raga-inspired harp chamber music hybridizations by Ravi Shankar and Caroline Lizotte,138 and more in-depth studies of compositions that employ microtonality, alternative tunings, or Eastern scales using the modern harp. Ethnographical studies of the modern pedal harp in Southeast Asian popular culture and the harp in Indian Bollywood traditions is an additional possibility.

The description of the late musical style of Hovhaness in Chapter 5 could have been further supplemented by an analysis of his post-1970 compositional output. This study would be a helpful complement to Rosner’s dissertation that discusses his earlier periods.

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137 See Alan Hovhaness’s Two Sonatas op. 110.

138 See Raga for Two Harps op. 41 by Caroline Lizotte and Ravi Shankar’s Enchanted Morning Raga for flute and harp.
currently exist of individual pieces yet none draw large-scale conclusions about his later musical style as a whole.

From a different perspective, Eastern musical traditions regularly borrow styles, ideas, and forms from Western classical music. This fact is most apparent in the popular-music traditions (such as K-pop and Bollywood) but few studies exist that pertain to art-music traditions in South, Southeast, and East Asia. The Eastern assimilation of Western musical ideas outside the realm of popular music would be extremely valuable to studies in musical hybridization.

**Concluding Remarks and Summary**

In her study of hybridity and perceptions of authenticity Weiss revealed that the determinants of authenticity in world music were largely ascertained by each individual’s prior musical experiences and aesthetic preferences. Music that was discovered to be familiar and compatible with the student’s pre-existing sound worlds (such as Western instruments playing traditional African rhythms and melodies) received greater praise. Upon the revelation that these pieces were hybrid realizations of ethnic traditions with the West, the pieces faced “a fall from grace” or negative change in reception as a result of perceptions of Western contamination and global market corruption.

According to Neil Sorrel, in the case of Javanese gamelan music, “gamelan music is more process than product and a Western composer who is relatively unfamiliar with Javanese culture is liable to treat the music simply as raw material on which to draw for the production of unrelated work.”¹³⁹ This reasoning stems from the growing fear that constant and deliberate global musical interaction will cause cultural gray-out and promote a sense of impermanency.

¹³⁹ Sorrell, 39-40.
that threatens national and regional identity. In music, the search for a pure and unadulterated prototype is intended to provide a catalyst upon which all judgments in regard to authenticity are based. The innate tendency to homogenize cultural patterns and musical traditions is aimed to preserve a way of life as if frozen in time.

The drive to “freeze” musical traditions in one stage of their development and place them on a pedestal of authenticity is antithetical to reality. Many outside factors shape recurring artistic practices in non-Western music traditions by challenging the expectations of a pure and timeless music tradition. Colonial, post-colonial, modern, pre-modern, social, technological, and religious determinants in musical perception are constantly evolving and cultural appropriations at any given time can alter or strengthen the “world music,” “Western,” “Eastern,” and “authentic” discourse. Drawing generalizations based upon a single moment in a musical tradition’s evolution disregards the impact of musical ancestry and is undesirable when attempting to determine the most historically and stylistically accurate descriptor of a music genre or cultural practice.140

I agree with Weiss, and after having studied and performed the works of Alves, Harrison, and Hovhaness, it is my belief that musical authenticity, its range, its clarity, and its recognition, is ultimately in the mind of the beholder, solely subject to individual musical and non-musical experiences. Individual perception is the sole determinant of authenticity and is legitimized over time by popular consensus. In a sense, striving for “authentic” musical authenticity is an exercise in futility. A collective consensus of scholars and musicians can define what it means for a piece to have a “traditional sound” but it must be recognized that every piece is, in one form or

140 Weiss, 517.
another, a hybrid. Discovering its original conception, free of outside infiltration, can only be
determined through scholarly speculation, not absolute truth.

From this perspective, the pieces discussed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 demonstrate similar
digressions regarding perceived authenticity. Alves, Harrison, and Hovhaness all combined
various degrees of Southeast Asian elements of tuning, melody, rhythm, and form in their pieces.
In particular, traces of influences from Indonesian gamelan compositional practices and
performance traditions were fused into their Western works using differing sets of formulas and
tools. Each composer’s music has been subject to praise and criticism (some even self-professed)
for having varying degrees of ethnic inaccuracy.

Alan Hovhaness, for example, was accused of “simple” writing that merely represented a
shadow of the world-music traditions he sought to imitate. In contrast, Lou Harrison was highly
praised for his diligence in immersing himself in Indonesian gamelan culture and his ability to
compose using traditional structures on traditional instruments. The irony lies in the fact that
both Hovhaness and Harrison traveled the world and made sincere efforts to develop their
understanding of various Eastern performance traditions. Each composer took lessons on
indigenous instruments, studied with Eastern philosophers, and collaborated with Eastern
scholars and performers. Thus, the opinion that Hovhaness’s music was “simple” by sounding
more Western, despite the highly complex yet less audible underlying elements of Eastern
philosophy in his works and was perceived as less authentic compared to that of Harrison.

In support of these previous statements, Hovhaness’s Upon Enchanted Ground op. 90/1
(1951), from his earlier period, uses innovative instrumental formal dialogue through modal,
fugue-like entrances, and contrapuntal activity. In this work, the bukā-inspired introduction is in
the spirit of Javanese gendhing, and in his The Flowering Peach op. 125 (1954) the imitation of
Javanese *pekingan*, cyclism, and *gongan* structures is also expressed. *Island of Mysterious Bells* op. 244 (1971) incorporates sophisticated extra-musical themes and formal patterns that relate to his interests in Buddhist philosophy and the cosmos.

Unlike Hovhaness, who primarily alluded to Southeast Asian gamelan music through Western classical structures, Harrison aimed to simulate the aural qualities of Indonesian music by writing for the instrument itself in combination with the harp. The second movement (“In Honor of the Divine Mr. Handel”) of his *Homage to Pacifica* combines the gamelan with harp to create a unique timbre that paved the way for compositions such as Alves’s *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan*. Similarly, the movements “7a Paragrafo” and “Mantro Kaj Kunsonoro” of *La Koro Sutro* combined harp with the American gamelan and expressed cyclical patterns that added a pleasant contrast to the organ and voice. “Avalokiteśvara” demonstrates Harrison’s experimentation with musical elements in Korean and Chinese music and philosophy, all of which are closely related to Southeast Asian perspectives and musical practices.

Further, we recognize that Alves’s *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan* is not considered a traditional gamelan piece in 1) its use of a solo Western instrument, 2) its Western notation, 3) the incorporation of an instrumental soloist, and 4) its non-traditional tuning. Sorrell lists the options afforded to a composer and performer, all of which were employed in composing previously discussed pieces such as Alves’s *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan*, Hovhaness’s *The Flowering Peach*, and Lou Harrison’s *Homage to Pacifica*. Sorrell clarifies:
The composer has a few options: trying to adapt the tuning of western forces to the fixed pitches of the gamelan; finding a kind of middle ground (or no-man’s-land) where both western and Javanese tunings can somehow meet; leaving the tunings as they are and enjoying the difference. All three have been tried and, if only for the sake of historical context, a fourth option should be added: the somewhat outmoded strategy of imitating the gamelan using western instruments—hence western tuning—alone.¹⁴¹

The Alves work represents a fifth and rare strategy in which an Indonesian gamelan maker is commissioned to build and tune the gamelan to Western pitches. Sorrell warns that to some musicians and composers, a gamelan constructed in this manner would cease to be a “proper gamelan.”¹⁴² I might ask, if the harp strings were tuned to gamelan pitches, would it cease to be a “proper harp”? The sonorities and timbres are still preserved, while this approach, however contentious, affords Western composers new creative outlets and musical opportunities.

In closing, cultural discrepancies and elisions are constantly revealed when diving deeper into the vast array of origins and regional demarcations of the gamelan tradition. Who then can confidently draw the boundaries between various non-Western genres and styles? Should we create distinct labels or allow for generic, all-encompassing terms such as those record label industries adopted in the 1980s? Will the choice of one option designate an ethnic music tradition as more “authentic” than another?

The solution is that there is no solution. To return to Weiss’s words, “…different minds, hear different things.”¹⁴³ Finding a solution towards a clean, universally accepted categorization of world-music genres may not be possible, but making an effort to faithfully realize and acknowledge the context of non-Western cultures in hybridized compositions is not only a gesture of respect, it is a mode of cultural compassion that sheds light upon another voice besides

¹⁴¹ Sorrell, 32.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Weiss, 204-5.
the voice of performer or composer in the Western performance context. Universal awareness can be a means by which to promote global benevolence and allow for artistic co-operation.

Cultural goods are to be protected, and it is clear that Harrison, Alves, and Hovhaness lived and breathed this reality. These individuals recognized that authenticity and hybridity are one and the same and represent an attempt to pool ideas and traditions into equitable fusions of Southeast Asian and Western idioms. There is no need to set the value of a musical composition or tradition according to its alleged hierarchy on a figurative and indefinable spectrum of authenticity.

The harp provides an additional medium by which these non-Western attitudes and time-honored traditions have been adapted and reproduced. Recognizing and respecting the complex legacy that paved the way to this hybridized music is truly valuable, and I have attempted to provide an introductory insight into a Southeast Asian tradition to which harpists, listeners, and composers are rarely exposed. We cannot hope to fully answer all the questions of authenticity that will emerge over time, but through compassion and cultural knowledge we can aim to pave the way toward a “world music” not hindered by its hybridization of disparate musical styles and genres, but embraced by it.
APPENDIX A: Distribution of Laras

Outline demonstrating the distribution of laras that make up the pélog pathet bem and pélog pathet barang mode alongside Western equal temperament and cipher notation. These modes are used in all four movements of Bill Alves’s Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan.

**Pélog Pathet Bem**

Cipher notation:  1  2  3  4*  5  6  7

Javanese short name:  Ji Ro Lu Pat Ma Nem Pi

Western notation:  D E F G A Bb C

**Pélog Pathet Barang**

Cipher notation:  2  3  4*  5  6  7

Javanese short name:  Ro Lu Pat Ma Nem Pi

Western notation:  E F G A Bb C

*Pat is rarely used and is not native to these modes.
APPENDIX B: Pitch and Tuning Correlations

This diagram outlines the approximate pitch correlations between hybridized tuning of the harp (top arrows) and the Earlham College gamelan in Richmond, Indiana, (bottom arrows) as they relate to Western equal temperament (A 440). Lines that connect the arrows are added to demonstrate the harp pitches that were adjusted to match to the gamelan. Pitches on the harp with “*” indicate tunings that were adapted to equal temperament. All octaves were tuned equally, and the cent distribution is provided. These tunings were used in both the Earlham College and Ball State University performances of the *Concerto for Harp and American Gamelan* in February 2015.

*Hybridized Tuning in the Harp*

+0
Pi/C*
+10
Ji/D
+0
Ro/E*
+10
Lu/F
+0
Pat/G*
+10
Ma/A
Nem/Bb

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**Earlham College Gamelan Tuning**
APPENDIX C: Lou Harrison Letter to John Schneider

Correspondence discussing Harrison’s love of the harp with guitarist John Schneider, 1992.144

John Schneider
229 Renkie Ave.
Venice, CA 90291

Dear John,

Thank you very much for your fine letter with all of its wonderful news. It was a joy to receive it. I am delighted that you’re doing the Parch reconstructions, and very happy indeed that you are working with harp as well. I must tell you a story about the latter instrument. As for myself, I have always been “exceedingly enamored” of the harp, and approve of a quote from the 16th and 17th century Spanish that Zabelota wrote about—“A gentleman will not be for long without his harp.” Indeed, what you are doing with guitar and harp brings vividly to mind the manuscript pictures of the court of Alfonso the Wise, especially since those instruments were then properly tuned.

I am again delighted that you have thought to include me in your album, and I much look forward to hearing them. The Cembalo Sonatas arrangement sounds to me wonderful, and I must share with you the secret that I keep my piano in Kirnberger’s 52, and find that I enjoy the gutsy D-to-A and A-to-E. I completely trust whatever you choose to do with the sonatas, and can only urge you on to Andalusia.

I do indeed have an unpublished—yee, even unfinished—harp piece which I will send in a day or so. It was written the day after Oliver Daniel died, and his life-companion Donald Ott had phoned me the morning of his death. I have not been satisfied with the approach to the ending of the piece, and will hope to solve that and send it to you soon. Bill has made a dub of the recording we made the day after I wrote it. It is meant to give you some idea of the mood and flow of the piece, and so that you can hear that it is in Ptolemy’s soft diatonic. Please forgive the recording; it was the cause of our ordering a DAT the following day. Again, please accept apologies for my amateur harpistics, but know that they are meant well.

Congratulations and fond greetings, from

Lou and Bill

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144 Letter courtesy of Bill Alves.
Lou Harrison’s handwritten note to Margaret Fisher outlining the ending of “Mantro Kaj Kunsonoro.”

Margaret-

In S.F. [San Francisco] we found out that our lowest slabs in “Old Granddad” were much higher when Karen played a four-octave spread, ff, along with them, so, I would be grateful if you’d make out a harp part to that effect. Of course we’ll need to see to the score as well ... I don’t know how.

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145 Lou Harrison, *La Koro Sutro*, Box 20:4 MS. 132, Ser. 1, #9, Special Collections Exhibits, Lou Harrison Archive, University of California Santa Cruz Library, Santa Cruz, CA.
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