



CONTEMPORARY MUSIC IN INDONESIA

NEW VOICES FROM THE ARCHIPELAGO

Edited by
Septian Dwi Cahyo



Contemporary Music in Indonesia

Contemporary Music in Indonesia: New Voices from the Archipelago provides insights into the evolution of Indonesian contemporary music in the 2000s. This comprehensive collection examines how gamelan, noise scenes, and experimental composition have transformed within Indonesia's diverse cultural landscape.

The volume features seven scholarly articles exploring key developments across the archipelago. Essays analyse the Yogyakarta music network, document the Indonesian noise scene's evolution, examine Papuan musical transformation, investigate new gamelan composition methods, explore timbre in contemporary gamelan music, study innovative instrument creation, and highlight women composers' contributions during the pandemic era. Each chapter combines socio-historical overview with detailed musical examination, revealing how Indonesian musicians navigate between tradition and innovation.

Essential reading for scholars and researchers of contemporary music, Southeast Asian studies, music composition, ethnomusicology, contemporary composition, and cultural studies, this book will also provide valuable insights to musicians and cultural practitioners interested in Indonesian musical innovation. The essays in this volume were originally published as a special issue of *Contemporary Music Review*.

Septian Dwi Cahyo is an Indonesian composer whose works have been performed by international ensembles including Orkest de Ereprijs, Spółdzielnia Muzyczna, Mondrian Ensemble, and Talea Ensemble. He has also served as a guest editor for the journal *Contemporary Music Review*.



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Chapter 2

Digging Through the Network of the Indonesian Noise Scene

Martinus Indra Hermawan

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Chapter 3

Voicing Papua: The Resonance of Rituals

Nyak Ina Raseuki

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Searching for the Unusual: New Methods of Composing for Gamelan

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Tradition in Suspension: Timbre in Contemporary Gamelan Compositions

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The Role of New Instruments in the Musical Works of Composers/Sound Artists in Indonesia

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Becoming Women Composers in Contemporary Indonesia: Music and Collective in the Pandemic Era

Halida Bunga Fisandra and Gema Swaratyagita

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Notes on Contributors

Septian Dwi Cahyo studied music composition with Beat Furrer at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz. His compositions have been performed by various ensembles and musicians, including Orkest de Ereprijs, Caroline Delume and Talea Ensemble, among others. In 2018 and 2019, he was awarded the ASEA Uninet SP24 Grant and the ASEA Uninet Ernst Mach Grant to study at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz and IEM Graz. His works have been published by Babel Scores. As a speaker, he has spoken at several conferences and venues. In 2021, he curated the Southeast Asian Music Series ‘Beyond Threshold—New Voices from Indonesia’ in Bangkok. In 2023, he was awarded the Arbeitsstipendium für Musikkomposition by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sports.

Halida Bunga Fisandra, received her degree in music composition from Institut Seni Indonesia, Yogyakarta, and master’s in anthropology from Universitas Indonesia. She is also a 2023 alumna of the Sekolah Pemikiran Perempuan. Her compositions include ‘Memoar: Sebuah Dedikasi untuk Walter Spies’ (2018) and ‘Jakarta Street: Recalling Ondel-Ondel’ (2018), the latter premiered by Melbourne contemporary music ensemble Plexus Trio. Dida’s thesis is titled ‘Musik sebagai Teknologi: Mediasi Bunyi Orkestra di Keraton Yogyakarta’ (2022), and articles include ‘Orkestra sebagai Peristiwa Mediasi: Jakarta City Philharmonic, Tubuh dan Materialitas’ (2022), and ‘Cyborg Orchestra: Pandemi, Teknologi, dan Peristiwa-Peristiwa Musikal’ (2023). She presented Monarch’s Orchestra: The (Im)possibilities of Music Decolonization in Contemporary Indonesia (2023) at Music’s Institution and the (De)colonial conference at Lund University, Sweden, alongside her collaborator, Aryo Danusiri. In 2023, Dida assisted Nyak Ina Raseuki in Rantai Bunyi, a music curatorial program for the biennial cultural festival *Pekan Kebudayaan Nasional*, hosted by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. Dida is the co-founder of Perempuan Komponis: Forum & Lab. Currently, she is the programme manager for education and performing arts at Komunitas Salihara Arts Center.

Martinus Indra Hermawan also known as Indra Menus, a musician based in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He sparked the Hardcore Punk band, To Die in 1998. He is active in the independent music gig organizers, Kongsi Jahat Syndicate; band tour booking agency, Y.K. Booking; runs three record labels: Doggy House Records, Rela Mati Records and Noise Bombing (with Sean Stellfox); engaged in zine archives and exhibition, Jogjakarta Zine Attack!. He is also the founder of Jogja Records Store Club, a collective of record stores and labels based in Yogyakarta. In 2009, he became one of the initiators of Jogja

Noise Bombing. In 2015 he released a compilation of 123 Indonesian Experimental Noise artists titled *Pekak! Indonesian Noise 1995–2015: 20 Years of Experimental Music from Indonesia* through Berlin-based label, Syrphe. Hermawan also writes about music in a Malaysian-based music magazine, *Shock and Awe*, and Yogyakarta-based *Warning Magazine*. Under Japan Foundation's Asia Center 2016 fellowship programme, he started his music research titled 'Building a Network between Experimental Noise Scenes in South East Asia and Japan'. In 2017, he released a book based on his research titled, *Pekak!* via Warning Books. In 2019, alongside Sean Stellfox, he released his second book *Jogja Noise Bombing: From the Street to The Stage*, via Warning Books. In 2022, his third book, a compilation of his music writings from 1999–2021 titled *Prolifik* was released by Samstrong Records.

Dion Nataraja is a composer, experimental vocalist, and scholar from Indonesia, currently pursuing a Ph.D. in music composition at UC Berkeley. His musical and scholarly works have been focusing on the intersection of areas such as Javanese gamelan, spectral techniques, instrument building, multimedia composition, and anticolonial theories. The composer-pianist Anthony Cheung described Dion's music as 'a true intercultural music for our time'. By the gamelan composer-performer Wahyu Thoyyib Pambayun, his music has been described as 'succeeded in expanding the musical language of the Javanese gender'. He has attended masterclasses and studied with musicians of various genres, such as Toshio Hosokawa, Chinary Ung, Ken Ueno, Edmund Campion, Carmine-Emanuele Cella, Nick Brooke, Allen Shawn, Steve Lehman, Darsono Hadiraharjo, and Midiyanto. In 2022, he was awarded as a OneBeat fellow. His music has been included as a part of Brown University's 'Asian Musical Modernisms' course syllabus, as well as in concerts such as PGVIS Symposium (Traditions in Transition), Jogja Noise Bombing, Salihara Jazz Buzz, MATA Festival, Soundbridge Festival, and many more. As a scholar, he has published his writing in *Jurnal Kajian Seni* of Gadjah Mada University, and he has given lectures in venues such as California Institute of the Arts, Salihara Arts Center, Gadjah Mada University, Pelita Harapan University, Perpromi, October Meeting, among others. At the moment, he is focusing his work on Sandikala Ensemble, a Yogyakarta-based ensemble that develops experimental techniques and new gamelan instruments with the aim of expanding contemporary gamelan music's horizon.

Nyak Ina Raseuki is an improviser-composer who earned a Master of Music and a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and then lectured at Graduate School, Urban Arts and Creative Industries at the Jakarta Institute of the Arts (IKJ), Indonesia. She is the author of *Being Islamic in Music: Two Contemporary Genres from Sumatra* (2017). Besides her academic commitments, she nurtures collaborative relationships with composers and traditional musicians across the Indonesia archipelago in many performances and recordings. Among her published recordings are alternative popular music *Archipelagongs* (Warner Music Indonesia, 1999), a new music *Music for Solo Performer: Ubiet Sings Tony Prabowo* (Musikita, Jakarta, 2006), a new interpretation of *kroncong* music, *Ubiet & Kroncong Tenggara* (demajors, Jakarta, 2007/2013), and one of her latest projects, *Olaijolo* (BIR, Jakarta, 2024), which interprets Eastern Indonesian songs.

Erie Setiawan is a writer, musician, facilitator, and director at Art Music Today, Music Information Centre, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Erie started his writing career in 2002 as a freelance journalist for several print media in Indonesia. In 2008–2010, Erie was editor of *Gong Magazine* (an art and culture magazine); from 2011 to 2016, he was editor of *compusiciannews.com* (an online media specialized in music and technology). Since 2008 until now, Erie has written dozens of books and contributed for several anthologies. Since 2012, Erie has been an editor and has released dozens of books, including research papers, composer's diaries, reference books, and several collections of essays. These books were written by well-known names in the Indonesian new music scene, including: Slamet Abdul Sjukur, Suka Hardjana, Wayan Sudirana, Septian Dwi Cahyo, etc. Erie and Art Music Today, which was founded in 2008, have carried out various activities related to documentation, event organization, publication, and audience development. Erie studied musicology at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts Yogyakarta (Bachelor) and cultural studies (Master) at Sebelas Maret University. Official website: www.artmusictoday.org. Personal blog: www.eriesetiawan.com.

Wayan Sudirana is a composer and ethnomusicologist who graduated from the University of British Columbia, Canada. He diligently studied ancient music in Bali. In addition, he also studied many world music traditions, such as Samulnori music from Korea, ensemble drumming from Ghana West Africa, South Indian drumming traditions, and also some Western classical music. With this experience, he developed his music with a strong foundation to seek a new identity in the realm of new music for gamelan. Sudirana has written two books about gamelan Gong Luang and edited a book about Gabor, a genre in Gamelan Gong Kebyar tradition. He has written many articles published in journals with the theme of traditional approaches in studying Balinese gamelan and world music, and new music development in Bali and Indonesia. His current research is focused on the development of new music in Bali and the ancient Balinese manuscript of Gamelan philosophy and theory.

Gema Swaratyagita, is a composer, music educator, and performer whose works often explore interdisciplinary art landscapes. Some of her works also explore vocals, soundscapes, and percussive elements as primary sound-making instruments. She founded Laring Collective as a sound-based creative activity, with musicians and artists working in an interdisciplinary collaboration. As a composer, she has seen her works performed at various events, such as Holland Festival, Yogyakarta Contemporary Music Festival, Pekan Komponis Indonesia, Djakarta Theater Platform, Musim Seni Salihara, and Southeast Asian Golden Age Symphony. Her music *Da-Dha-Dah* (2015) was commissioned and performed by Ensemble Modern (Frankfurt) in Ruang Suara project. In addition to teaching and creating her own works and teaching, this woman composer has participated in residencies, such as through a cultural grant to New Zealand, the EWA Kelola grant, and the Sekolah Pemikiran Perempuan 2022 scholarship. She was involved as collaborating artist for 2022 Indonesia Bertutur's Ruwatan Bumi programme, alongside other women artists, including Melati Suryodarmo, Nyak Ina Raseuki, and Hartati. She is one of the co-founder of Perempuan Komponis: Forum & Lab; and founder of Bumi Bunyi: Creative Music Education.

Introduction: 'Newness' Reconsidered: Reflections on New Music from Indonesia

Dion Nataraja, Erie Setiawan, and Septian Dwi Cahyo

Following the earlier studies on Indonesian contemporary music (Hardjana 1986, 1995, 1996; Mack 1994, 1995, 2001, 2004, 2022; Miller 2014, Tenzer 2000; Raden 1994; Sjukur 1994; Tambayong 1994), the seven articles in this Special Issue continue the investigation of Indonesian contemporary music, addressing its current issues through socio-historical overview, musical analysis, and philosophical reflections. With these papers, we hope to expand the discourse of New Music that generally, hitherto, has been dominated by a discourse which privileges Euro-American positionality. This move, no matter how much it expects to provide a critical lens towards history and contemporary society, unfortunately, illustrates once more the dominance of the Western perspective—as Spivak wrote “some of the most radical criticism coming out the West today is the result of an interested desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject (2010, 22).” We hope to provide an alternative to this hegemonic tendency by pointing out histories and genealogies that are often dismissed in the mainstream discourse of New Music. In this sense, our project is to present the multiplicity of the modernities that have emerged outside of the West, which in this issue specifically deals with Indonesia. This resonates with a term often used by Walter Dignolo, the “pluriversal” (2007, 452) indicating a worldview which consists of multiple civilizations, multiple histories, with no one positionality devouring another. Thus, our project is an attempt at a pluriversal world-building.

The term ‘new music’ (often colloquially referred to as contemporary music or *musik kontemporer*) has been used in Indonesia since the 1970s. According to Erie Setiawan (2024, 2), ‘new music,’ as understood in Indonesia, is a multi-interpretive term. This means that it is not limited to the definition of new music offered, for instance, by Adorno and Schoenberg, who argued that new music must be fundamentally different from previously composed music and convey something that has not been expressed before, and that it has to bring new ideas (Schoenberg, 1946), or challenge listeners with new sounds, structures, and concepts (Adorno, 1999). Though there are scholars and composers who use the phrase ‘new music’ to define works by Indonesian composers that bring new ideas, new concepts, as well as pieces that appear as strange, unusual, and anti-traditional (Pasaribu 2005; Sudirana 2024), Setiawan (2024) argues that in Indonesia, new music can also refer to music that is perceived as new by specific groups of people, regardless of its genre or style. He provides the example of musical activities by Western ensembles in the 19th century at the Yogyakarta and Surakarta Palaces; these were considered as ‘new music’ by people in the Keraton who were more familiar with gamelan, their traditional music.

Setiawan's article provides a diverse view of 'new music' by presenting a survey of the historical facts and key developments of new music in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He wrote that in the last two decades (2000–2020), new music activity in Yogyakarta has grown rapidly. Various creative forums and spaces that support composers, along with the internet and advancements in music technology, have contributed to this growth. These advancements have allowed for a proliferation of musical styles and forms and have facilitated communication among composers.

In another article, Martinus Indra Hermawan,¹ also known as Indra Menus, demonstrates how the decentralized noise scene emerged in Indonesia. Menus traces the precursors of the noise scene from the 1990s to the present day and provides facts about its development and its spread throughout the country. He provides detailed information on the distribution of the scene across Indonesia and how the communities are connected through various media, such as WhatsApp groups. The article also demonstrates how the noise scene became a 'meeting point' of diverse backgrounds, attracting members from not the just punk subculture, but also alumni of formal music institutions like the Indonesian Institute of The Arts Padang Panjang. This crossing of boundaries was also illustrated at the 2023 Jogja Noise Bombing Festival (JNB), where a new gamelan ensemble, the Sandikala ensemble formed by Dion Nataraja and Yustiawan Paradigma Umar, performed pieces by Nataraja that aesthetically originated from different backgrounds such as spectralism and Javanese gamelan.

Nyak Ina Raseuki in her article 'Voicing Papua: The Resonance of Rituals' reveals how new music activities today are not limited to Java and Bali, but also take place in Papua. Raseuki dissects new music in Papua through the work of Septina Rosalina Layan, a composer from Papua who often explores the locality of Papuan music in her works. Raseuki sees Layan's experimentation with local music in Papua as a manifestation of novelty, a novelty that brings Papuan music to another phase, to its new form. Based on this view, Raseuki argues that Layan's music can also be used as a tool to respond sharply to the Indonesian nationalist project that views local culture as something overly simplified, standardized and frozen.

Wayan Sudirana in his article, traces and analyzes the contemporary practices in the world of Balinese gamelan composition. Here, Sudirana lays out a brief history of music composition in the Balinese gamelan, which includes mention of names such as Wayan Gde Yudane and Dewa Alit, followed by an in-depth analysis of new works by young Balinese composers. An aspect that arises from this presentation is a clear trace of a musical genealogy, showing a strong sense of historicity: the term *musik kontemporer*—an Indonesian linguistic adoption for contemporary music—denotes a lineage of contemporaneity that is based on the history of Balinese gamelan. Sudirana's essay provides an alternative narrative of how the word 'contemporaneity' could be understood—as historically and presently, the word is often monopolized exclusively by Euro-American discourse—by presenting a model of contemporaneity that rests independent of the Western lineage. This approach resonates with Walter Mignolo's theory of delinking: a practice of building genealogies that does not merely rely on the Western heritage in order to craft a multipolar center of culture, a pluriversal world.

The article by Dion Nataraja provides analysis regarding timbre, especially in the works of Indonesian composers that involve gamelan. In this paper, Nataraja analyzes the rise of timbre as a compositional parameter by looking at new gamelan works after the year 2010, specifically, focusing on the works of Septian Dwi Cahyo, Irene Tanuwidjaja, Dion Nataraja, Dieter Mack, Putu Septa, Arham Aryadi, Arya Deva Suryanegara, and Yan Priya Kumara Janardhana. His article also traces historical shifts in the discourse concerning timbre in gamelan by looking at gamelan composers of the twentieth century, such as I Wayan Sadra, Pande Made Sukerta, Aloysius Suwardi, Ki Tjokrowasito, and Ki Nartosabdho. From this study, he concludes that the rise of timbre as a dominant compositional parameter creates a shift in the overall makeup of the tradition; timbre destabilizes the aesthetic conception of gamelan.

Septian Dwi Cahyo investigates new instruments created by Indonesian composers and sound artists in his article. According to Cahyo, in Indonesia, the development of musical instruments as a creative element in the work of some composers and sound artists has existed since the 1980s and has increased in the decade of the 2000s. This phenomenon raises several sites of investigations: the reasons and concepts behind the practice of building these new instruments, the innovations resulting from this practice, and finally, the sound results arising from these new instruments. This investigation led to two conclusions. First, certain Indonesian composers and sound artists have devised fresh instruments as a means of broadening or breaking away from traditions, enabling them to craft the diverse soundscapes they desire. Additionally, some Indonesian composers and sound artists have fashioned new musical instruments not just to achieve their desired sound but also to create a medium that symbolically represents the societal issues their community faces.

In the final article, Fisandra and Swaratyagita take issue with the underrepresentation of women composers in traditional accounts of Indonesian music. This essay provides multifarious readings of the question of gender in Indonesian music scene. They combine a wide range of approaches, including historical study—bringing to light composers such as Trisutji Kamal and Soe Tjen Marching—and autoethnography—documenting the collective movements, activities, and standpoints of *Perempuan Komponis: Forum & Lab* (English: *Women Composers*)—as well as musical analysis and narratives of the works of Indonesian woman composers such as Gema Swaratyagita, Nyak Ina Raseuki, and Dinar Rizkianti. Those three aspects are framed by a theoretical reflection that was posed by Linda Nochlin on the notion of ‘greatness’ in art by deconstructing the masculine bias, to disrupt assumptions often attached to art created by women: the dismissive view that women’s works are non-absolute, non-rational, overly intuitive, or limited to themes of domestic life.

We hope that this issue could close the gap in the global discourse of New Music, as well as further expanding on the studies that have been written about contemporary music in Indonesia. This issue aims to give readers an insight into the current development of contemporary music in Indonesia and, consequently, presents the notion of a pluriversal world consisting of a junction between overlapping temporalities and histories. To put it succinctly, this issue aims to recenter modernities that have been generally ignored and sidelined.

Note

1. His stage name, Indra Menus (Menus), as how he is called in Indonesia, will be used in this paper.

Disclosure Statement

No conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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New Music Activity in Yogyakarta, Indonesia 2000–2020 (History and Network)

Erie Setiawan

ABSTRACT

In the last two decades (2000–2020), new music activity in Yogyakarta has grown rapidly, due to the emergence of various creative forums/spaces that have accommodated the works of composers. The emergence of the internet and musical technology devices has also increasingly created various styles and forms of work, and has facilitated communication for composers. This article is only an introduction, to record, chronologically and partially, the events and network patterns among new music composers in the last two decades, especially what happened in Yogyakarta, on history and network. I am also directly involved on annual programme called October Meeting Contemporary Music and Musicians (from 2016 until now). In conclusion, it seems that the role and initiative of individuals and collectives has had an important impact on the development of new music in Yogyakarta. The study also produces interesting reflections about *audience development*, which is a challenge for composers and all other interested parties in Indonesia.

Yogyakarta: A Brief History

Yogyakarta, one of the cities in Indonesia, could be said to be an important part of the early development of new music in Indonesia. We can trace the history approximately from the beginning of the twentieth century, since the arrival of Walter Spies at the Yogyakarta Palace. Walter Spies, the German painter and composer, changed piano tunings to Javanese scales as an experiment; he also influenced the emergence of Javanese dance accompaniment that combines Javanese gamelan and Western music. Walter Spies is recognised as one of the pioneers of the ‘modernization’ of art in Java. The same thing also happened in Surakarta, 60 km from Yogyakarta, where the Dutch East Indies composers, such as Paul Seelig, Constante van de Wall, and Linda Bandara, composed many pieces that at that time were considered ‘new’ by the Surakarta Palace environment, who were more familiar with gamelan. Henk Mak van Dijk, pianist and researcher, said the work of these Dutch East Indies composers is called Indisch Classical Music. In the palace environment, where the main culture is gamelan, their music can be considered as offering something ‘new’ to the ears.¹

Before Indonesia declared independence in 1945, there had been several important moments in Yogyakarta which indicated the existence of new music activities (music outside of Javanese culture). For example, the emergence of Taman Siswa—which is present as an alternative educational space by prioritising the values of art and culture—also influenced reforms as a counter to Western colonial education. In 1952, the *Sekolah Musik Indonesia* (Indonesian Music School or SMIND) was established in Yogyakarta with the first headmaster, composer Amir Pasaribu. Amir Pasaribu's role is very important in realising reforms and inspiration to introduce new music to students and the people of Yogyakarta and Indonesia in general. Following the establishment of the *Akademi Musik Indonesia* (AMI) in 1961 and the Indonesian Institute of The Arts (ISI) in 1984, new music in Yogyakarta is increasingly in demand, especially by students.

About 'New Music' Terminology in Indonesia

I would like to briefly discuss how the terminology 'new music' is understood in Indonesia. The term 'New Music', which is understood in Indonesia, is actually a multi-interpretive term. When compared to 'popular music' or 'traditional music', which have existed and developed in Indonesia, both are relatively simple to understand and are not bound by the term 'new' (related to both material and idea). But in fact, the term 'new music' has been used, although in a limited way. As a recent example, in April 2022, Nusasonic² released a compilation album *Common Tonalities*, containing works by composers in the Southeast Asia region. In the description of the project, they also include the term 'new music':

Common Tonalities is a project that explores Southeast Asian tuning systems and scales through modern music technologies for the creation of **new music**. We invite participants to a series of workshops, led by Khyam Allami, that focus on the subject of tuning and the cultural biases in music technologies, the practical analysis of tuning systems of Southeast Asian music based on published resources and archival recordings, and how to use them in various creative musical processes.³

Much earlier, in 1991, Jody Diamond and Larry Polansky had written an article that included the term 'new music'. The article, entitled 'The New Music Indonesia Commissioning Project: Goals and Problems in a Cross-Cultural Collaboration', was presented at UC Berkeley as part of the Festival of Indonesia. Furthermore, the term 'new music' was also used for the album produced by Lyrichord Records in 1993, with the title: *New Music of Indonesia*.⁴ It is released in several volumes and contains works by Indonesian composers, one of whom is I Wayan Sadra.⁵ Dieter Mack, a musicologist and composer from Germany, can be said to have contributed greatly to building the discourse around new music and contemporary music in Indonesia since the 1990s. He has paid great attention to music that grew up in Indonesia, especially traditional music and contemporary music. His books have been released in Indonesia and have become the main reading for students of music composition and composers to study the dynamics of new music in Indonesia.⁶ Franki Notosudirdjo in his dissertation (2001) also repeatedly mentions the term 'Musik Indonesia Baru' (New Music Indonesia) in his discussion of the political situation, music, and the problems of national identity in Indonesia, especially related to the work of composer Amir Pasaribu. Notosudirdjo's dissertation

conducted in-depth research on the facts surrounding the political-music policy upheaval from time to time until the collapse of the New Order regime. He also gave a title to one of the chapters of the dissertation: *The Genesis of Indonesian Art Music*. The idea of ‘Art Music’ in Indonesia has also emerged during the formation of a national musical identity in Indonesia (Notosudirdjo 2001). Septian Dwi Cahyo (2019) wrote a paper with the title ‘New Music in Indonesia: its Development, Thoughts, and Tendencies’. This short survey indicates that the term ‘new music’ has indeed been used in Indonesia. Forum Musik Tembi (FoMbi) in Yogyakarta has an annual festival (from 2011 till present) inviting Indonesian composers to perform their works. FoMbi uses the term ‘Musik Tradisi Baru’ (New Tradition Music) to refer to the composers’ works performed.⁷

Some Questions

The next questions will become more specific. For example, what is the parameter of the term ‘new’ in the new music (especially for Indonesian composers)? Does Indonesia really know and understand the term ‘new music’ as a cultural phenomenon—just like traditional music? I suspect that, apart from the implications for material and concept, the term ‘new music’ can have the meaning that ‘music’ is ‘new’ for certain groups of people, so that it is not tied to certain types of music that already exist in an environment. For example, in the nineteenth century, in the Yogyakarta and Surakarta Palaces, there were Western musical activities in the form of ensembles, and this music was ‘new music’ for the people in the Keraton, who were more familiar with gamelan as their traditional music. From terminology, history, and epistemology, to be honest, the term ‘new music’ in Indonesia to this day still contains many problems.

When translated into Indonesian, New Music means ‘Musik Baru’, and the term ‘Musik Baru’ (in Indonesian and to the Indonesian people) still sounds unusual. The term ‘Musik Baru’ is actually very rarely used, except as the English term: New Music. From the historical perspective, Indonesian people are not familiar with the term New Music as a culture, its source coming from the West due to the influence of colonialism. The terms ‘new music’ and ‘contemporary music’ are also often used interchangeably, in more or less the same sense, and these terms can even be used spontaneously by composers without having to be tied to the burden of history, terminology, or epistemology. The following statement by Dieter Mack strengthens this view:

Is there really a ‘Contemporary Music’ or a ‘New Music’ in Indonesia? Sure there is one, although Indonesians themselves have different opinions about it, and ‘confusion’ would be a convenient term to describe the current situation. Therefore it could be useful to rethink about both—originally Western—terms, whether they can be transferred to other cultures with their respective different historical backgrounds or not. (Mack 2009)

However, this article does not want to debate the terminology of new music and contemporary music that exists and develops in Indonesia, but rather presents a survey of the facts that occurred, in order to find out what is important to conclude at this time regarding new music in Indonesia in the context of history and networks—particularly during the last 20 years. It is also important to see some traces of the important events surrounding its existence and development.