This portfolio contains two recital performances of 90 minutes’ duration presented on 20 April 2012 and 25-26 February 2013, a lecture-demonstration of 45 minutes’ duration with 15 minutes of questions presented on 24 June 2013, and a 30,000- to 40,000-word thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts at The University of Western Australia.
The first recital, *In the Demon’s Circle: Love, Lyrics and Lotus Flowers*, was developed as a retrospective to chronicle my performing arts career trajectory in Java, Indonesia. It presented music and dance works relevant to my evolution as a nationally recognised, skilled and accomplished Javanese singer-dancer performer. The recital included the dances *Bapang*, a popular East Javanese masked dance; the male-style *Ngremo* dance; and, the female-style *Lengger Banyumas*, a dance grounded in a West Javanese version of the singer-dancer (*tandhak tayub*) tradition and in which I also both danced and sang. The songs and classical gamelan orchestral pieces (*gendhing*) that I sang as part of the recital similarly reflected the various influences that have informed my performance practice. Starting with a number of poetic verses in the traditional *macapat* sung poetry repertoire that I sang in Javanese, I also included the popular short piece ‘Floating Caterpillar’ (*Jineman Uler Kambang*), the *macapat* verse form inspired *Sinom Parijoto* and the song ‘Broken Hearted’ (*Langgam Dadi Ati*).

The recital concluded with the classical piece *Ladrang Pangkur*, also based on *macapat* sung poetry, and this was followed by the exhibition piece, the slow (*Tikel*) *Ayak-ayak 9*.

Performed in the Callaway Music Auditorium at The University of Western Australia, the recital also showcased audio-visual backing track accompaniment projected against a large white screen. Recorded in Java, the backing tracks were intended both to provide professional quality musical accompaniment as well as to give an impression of the performance ambience in Java. Voice-over narratives that accompanied projected *in situ* recordings provided additional ethnographic information for the recital. Printed programme notes were also given to members of the audience and offered further information about the songs and dances performed in the recital.
1.1b. Creative Component: Doctor of Musical Arts’ Recital 2

The second recital, *Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle*, adopted a new approach to the traditions of my embodied practice. As I developed the narrative for the second recital, I wished to respond to questions about identity that had emerged in the process of preparing the first. I also wished to creatively reconstruct and reformulate the traditional material and reinvigorate my performance repertoire. Based on my 2006 unpublished manuscript about a professional performer and magically powerful shaman, the narratives for the recital used *macapat* sung poetry in order to performatively and organically reflect its subject matter. Performed in the Mount Lawley Senior High School Tricycle Theatre, and unlike the first, solo recital, the performance also included nine associate student artists.

The division of the recital into five sections and written in English mirrored the five stages of Javanese magical mysticism and the associated *macapat* sung poetry tradition. Basing the narrative on the traditional Javanese mystical sayings ‘four directions, five in the centre’ (*keblat papat limo pancer*) and ‘four siblings, five in the centre’ (*dulur papat limo pancer*) provided the skeletal narrative framework on which were layered other performance elements. Please see Chapter Four for a detailed discussion of Javanese mysticism. In addition to audio-visual backing tracks of variously accompanied *macapat* verse forms and classical Javanese gamelan *gendhing* recorded in Java with professional Javanese musicians, the recital incorporated live performers, hybrid costume and staging as well as elements of Western theatre. Bringing Java’s myth and magic to life on stage in Perth, Western Australia, the recital aimed to push the boundaries of contemporary multicultural and syncretic performance art and explored the various manifestations of my embodied performance practice.
1.2. Presentation Component: Lecture-demonstration

The lecture-demonstration explored *macapat* sung poetry. I considered my use of *macapat* as a performance technique and the ways in which I had tried to use the tradition to address the enduring issue of language in the performance recitals. After an introduction to the history and background of *macapat* in Indonesia, I considered the poetic structures, i.e. the rules for the prosodic and metrical structures of *macapat*. Following some discussion of my experiences learning and performing *macapat*, the lecture-demonstration considered the challenges that I had faced in casting the English-language narrative of *Srimaya’s Fall From the Demon’s*.

The lecture-demonstration included audio-visual footage from the two performance recitals as well as live performances of a number of different *macapat* verse texts. In particular, the lecture-demonstration gave special attention to the challenge of writing and performing English-language texts with artistry. Throughout my DMA candidature, audience feedback has helped me to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of my performances. The lecture-demonstration concluded by reflecting upon different audience reactions to the February 2013 performances of *Srimaya’s Fall From the Demon’s Circle*. 
1.3. Written Component: Thesis

*Srimaya’s Fall: A Work of Javanese Theatricality and Intercultural Arts in Practice*

Karen Elizabeth Schrieber

20890011

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for
the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

School of Music
The University of Western Australia
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Abstract

This Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) project critically evaluates two performance recitals and one lecture-demonstration. Initially aimed at facilitating my transition from Javanese performing artist in Indonesia to multicultural arts practitioner in Perth, Western Australia, the creative portion of this work explores the issues of authenticity, multiculturalism and cultural identity. The research has drawn from anthropological and ethnomusicological studies pertaining to Javanese music, dance and art. These studies, also highlighting current trends toward auto-ethnography, have contributed to my recontextualisation process, both geographically as well as professionally. Following the retrospective, ritual-as-performance first recital, *In the Demon’s Circle: Love, Lyrics and Lotus Flowers*, performed in 2012, the reflective practices of performance as research provided insights from which the more sophisticated and syncretic second recital, *Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle*, developed and was subsequently performed in early 2013. In addition to devising these creative works, the project also addresses a significant gap in contemporary research vis-à-vis intercultural artistic practice. The ways in which the two recitals present Javanese theatre, dance and music ‘texts’ raise significant issues concerning artistic authenticity, particularly as articulated by what I describe as the ‘demon’s circle’ (*lingkaran setan*), the eponymous inspiration for both recitals. Based on a Javanese folk saying, the demon’s circle refers to the kinds of vicious circles and no-win situations that are absurd because they have no easy solutions. The contributions of this research pertain as well to the work of artists who develop embodied skills in one culture and subsequently mediate these learned techniques for audiences in new spaces and new cultural contexts.
Acknowledgements

This project is the result of my life-long fascination with Javanese dance, music and culture. It is also the product of my decision to leave Indonesia in 2010 and embark upon a new career path. I would like to thank all of my teachers, friends and colleagues in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. My greatest debt is to my many instructors, Pak Kusnadi, M. Soleh Adi Pramono, Mbah Rasimoen, Mak Riati, Mbah Karimoen, Ki Supatman, Ibu Supadmi and Bapak Sumantri for their support and patient instruction. I would especially like to thank the members of the Mangun Dharma Art Centre’s group of professional musicians who helped to develop and record all of the audio-visual backing tracks that I used to accompany the two performance recitals. Without the help and direction of Bapak Kusnadi, himself an amazing drummer and musician, it would not have been possible to produce the recordings or present the recitals.

In Perth I would like to thank my supervisors, Jane Davidson, Stephen Chinna and Jonathan McIntosh, for their friendship, support and extremely helpful feedback. Generously providing critical insight and suggestions for how to unpack the tangles of my creative process, their feedback has been invaluable. Their support over the past three years has been instrumental in bringing me to striking new understandings about my personal and artistic identity. I am also extremely grateful to my associate artists and their parents for their enthusiastic participation in Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle as well as Dr Dale Irving and the staff at Mount Lawley Senior High School for their support and for generously providing access to the Tricycle Theatre. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their essential support over the years; in particular I would like to single out my daughters, Condro and Ndaru. While many people have contributed to this project in one way or another, I take full responsibility for the shortcomings of the work.
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Orthography

In Javanese, a number of sounds associated with the letters \( t \), \( d \), \( a \), \( e \) and \( o \) are not always indicated when written in roman script. The letters \( t \) and \( d \) have both dental (the tip of the tongue touches the back of the top teeth) and alveolar (formed by curling the tip of the tongue back to the alveolar ridge) variants indicated by the spellings \( d \), \( t \) and \( dh \), \( th \) respectively. Three different pronunciations associated with the letter \( e \) are also not always represented when Javanese is written in roman script. For the sake of readability, I have followed the common East Javanese practice of indicating dental and alveolar \( ts \) and \( ds \) but have not used diacritics for the letter \( e \). The following table provides the reader with an approximate guide to the pronunciation of vowels and consonants in Javanese. A full glossary of Javanese terms used in the present work is provided at the end of the exegesis.

- **a**: In a closed syllable (ending with a consonant), as in father (gagah)
  - In an open syllable (ending with a vowel), like aw in law (murwa)
- **c**: as in English chin or Italian ciao (macapat)
- **d**: dental \( d \) (demung)
- **dh**: alveolar \( d \) (dhalang)
- **e**: é: as in ate (pélog)
  - è: as in bet (gendèr)
  - ê: as in bird (gendhing)
- **i**: as in beet (irama)
- **o**: In a closed syllable, as in bore (babok)
  - In an open syllable, as in zero (durmo)
- **r**: a rolled \( r \) (salisir)
| t:   | dental t                      | (tari topeng) |
| th:  | alveolar t                    | (pathet)     |
| u:   | as in boot (talu) or bull (bedug) | (durmo)      |
Chapter 1:  
White – Introduction

This Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) project critically evaluates two performance recitals and one lecture-demonstration. These performance elements were initially aimed at facilitating my transition from an American trained as a Javanese performing artist performing in Indonesia to multicultural arts practitioner in Perth, Western Australia. Born a US citizen, I lived in the sub-regency (kecamatan) of the village of Tumpang, East Java,¹ between the years 1990 and 2010. During this time, and as a result of longitudinal study, I established a local and national career as a professional Javanese singer and dancer. In addition, I also managed a successful arts centre. Such roles were deemed acceptable in Java because of the position I held within the East Javanese community. The Mangun Dharma Art Centre’s mission was to preserve and promote the traditional arts of East Java, most specifically those found in and around Malang. The centre offered classes and workshops to local, domestic and international students in woodcarving, batik, shadow puppet making, dance and music. The centre was also often hired to provide performances for wedding receptions, circumcisions and government, community and private events.

I married well-known choreographer and Javanese puppet master (dhalang), M. Soleh Adi Pramono, in 1991 and we had two children together. Married to such a highly respected member of the community, I first claimed respect and prestige as a consequence of my husband’s esteemed position. Marriage in Java provides a bride with the same status as her husband, and Soleh commanded respect at both a

¹ The village of Tumpang rests in the shadows of the Semeru-Bromo mountain ranges, situated 25 kilometres east of the city of Malang (population approximately 780,000) in East Java, Indonesia. Tumpang is notable for its vibrant performing arts traditions and two historic, Majapahit-era temples, Jago and Kidal, which rest within its borders.
community and a regional level.² Soleh therefore gave me my original entrée into the Malang arts community where I subsequently studied with many respected local artists.³ After extensive study with such individuals I eventually became a member of the elite Indonesian category of ‘guest star performer’ (*bintang tamu*) entertainers. Associated with ‘modern’ elements and applied to gamelan ensemble performances, the Western notion pertaining to the category of *bintang tamu* was first introduced into Java in the 1990s (see Becker, J. 1975, Sutton 1996). My reputation as a performer resulted in numerous invitations to perform throughout Indonesia, on national Indonesian television, and for both the former Indonesian President, Megawati Sukarnoputri, and the incumbent President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. In 2007, I also hosted a weekly television programme, ‘Elizabeth Sings’ (*Elizabeth Nyindhen*), which was broadcast on the East Javanese regional TV station JTV. In 2010, aiming to build on this success, I left Java and moved to Perth, Western Australia, with my two daughters. In doing so, I had to accept the possibility of relinquishing the Javanese aesthetic that had long informed my professional practice.

Upon arriving in Perth, I faced the reality of recontextualising myself as an artist working in a Western Australian context. Indeed, such a process was the original catalyst for the present study and was explored in two performance recitals that were presented in Perth in 2012 and 2013. During this time, I also looked to academic sources for guidance relating to my embodied practice as a Javanese

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² In Java, a successful *dhalang* is accomplished in music, drama and story telling, and holds extensive mystical power (for further discussion of *dhalang*, see Foley 1984 and 1985).
³ I studied with numerous authorities such as the now deceased traditional Malang mask dancers *Mbah* Rasimoen, *Mbah* Karimoen and *Mbah* Gimun; deceased *Tandhak* Beskalan Mak Rianti; sung poetry puppeteer (*dhalang* macapat) *Ki* Supatman; and, gamelan authorities, including *Bapak* Sumantri, Lecturer in East Javanese Gamelan at Malang University, and deceased *Bapak* Madya of Pucung, Malang Regency; Kusnadi, drummer and authority on East Javanese gamelan; Djupri, dancer and ‘owner’ of Ibu Muskayah’s dances; and, Ibu Supadmi, lecturer at the Surakarta National Arts Institute (ISI or *Institute Seni Indonesia*-Surakarta). I also studied *Gandrung* in Banyuwangi with singer-dancer *Mbah* Suanah (now sadly deceased); Madura mask dance with members of the *Rakan Perawas Dance Group*; *Lengger* with Banyumas traditional performer Endang Purvakerta; Sundanese *Jaipongan* with Rika and Didik Nini Thowok; and, finally, traditional East Javanese dances such as *Gumungsari, Klono, Bapang, ngremo, Beskalan* and modern choreographies with Malang traditional arts authority, M. Soleh Adi Pramono. These artists are considered to be unequalled within their individual fields of practice.
singer/dancer and for suggestions as to how I could develop my practice in Western Australia. During this time, therefore, and to aid this process of recontextualisation, I drew on research emanating from anthropology and ethnomusicology concerning Javanese music, dance and art, as well as studies highlighting the current trend toward auto-ethnography. Thus, in addition to devising creative work, this project also addresses a significant gap in contemporary research vis-à-vis intercultural artistic practice, particularly as it concerns artists who learn skills in one cultural context and perform them in another. The ways in which the recitals present Javanese theatre, dance and music ‘texts’ raise significant issues concerning artistic authenticity, particularly as articulated by what I have described as the Javanese cultural trope, the ‘demon’s circle’ (lingkaran setan). This demon’s circle, the eponymous inspiration for both recitals, is based on a Javanese folk saying – similar to Heller’s (1961) ‘Catch 22’ – which refers to a vicious circle or absurd, no-win situation. These situations are absurd because they have no easy solutions and are inescapable.

In practice, I have faced the bite of the demon’s circle a number of times: whilst in Indonesia I had the long frustrated wish to be seen as a competent artist without reference to my foreign ethnicity; in Perth (and beyond), I continue to feel this prejudice, but in reverse when I am categorically denied recognition as a ‘Javanese performing artist’ due to my ethnicity – I am clearly not Javanese. The present project and exegesis are therefore an effort to explain what the demon’s circle means to me, how I came to be ensnared in its circumference, the ways in which the two performance recitals have expressed its various, evolving qualities, and, finally, what being ‘in the demon’s circle’ meant in the first recital and what ‘falling from the demon’s circle’ in the second recital means for my performance future.
In order to question and critically evaluate the two self-devised performance recitals, I take two distinct approaches. The first, grounded in Western social science methodologies, is based in the fields of reflective practice and auto-ethnography, performance studies, ethnomusicology and phenomenology. Additionally, I have referred to the findings of some relevant approaches drawn from tourism studies that consider the troublesome issue of ‘authenticity’, applying them to critical interrogations of my performances of Javanese music and dance. To aid these critical reflections on my artistic life, the second approach takes its inspiration from Javanese magic and mysticism. Javanese mysticism will be discussed in Chapter 4: Red in relation to the second recital. Thus, and by combining Western critical theory and Javanese mystical belief, this exegesis explores the ‘work-process of learning to understand’ (Mrázek 2005: 2) how my performance recitals both interrogate and are informed by the demon’s circle. Before considering the two streams of my methodology, however, a brief review of the literature will situate my research and provide a framework for the current study as it relates to the Javanese performing arts, in particular those of East Java.

**Javanese Music and Dance**

The island of Java is divided into three major cultural areas: West Java (including Sunda, Cirebon and Banyumas), Central Java and East Java (see figure 1). The present study focuses specifically on my time in the Regency of Malang, an area within the province of East Java that boasts significant cultural diversity. Little scholarship on the traditions of East Java has applied the performance-based, auto-ethnographic approach used in the present study. Nonetheless, substantial scholarly writings concerning Javanese culture and society have been written from the perspectives of anthropology, musicology and ethnomusicology. For example, a
number of early studies by Dutch scholars focus upon the myriad dance, music and theatre traditions specific to Central Java.⁴

Figure 1. Map of Java, Indonesia.

Before the 1900s, scholarly texts pertaining to gamelan music⁵ – written by indigenous and non-indigenous scholars – tended to document musical practices uncritically or were basic music manuals and study guides for performers. Following the publication of Pigeaud’s (1938) authoritative compendium on Javanese dance and drama genres, and Kunst’s (1949) thorough examination of Javanese musical traditions, Javanese music began to receive attention from scholars working in the field of comparative musicology, ethnomusicology’s precursor, as well as those concerned with preserving ‘endangered’ musical traditions (see Sutton 1991: 8). Of particular importance, these monographs examined Javanese musical styles and ensembles found across the island and have since informed almost all musicological

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⁴ See Brandts Buys and Brandts Buys-van Zilp (1925), Pigeaud (1932) and Kunst (1949).
⁵ Synonymous with the islands of Java and Bali, a gamelan ensemble is an orchestra consisting of gongs, metallophones, drums and flutes, and, in Java, the female singer (pesindhen).
writings on the gamelan orchestra. After 1945, and following Indonesia’s independence, many non-Dutch scholars also developed an interest in Java. However, much of this work imposes Western theoretical frameworks onto the cultural logics of Javanese society and the Javanese performing arts.

Such an approach is evident in Hood’s (1954) seminal study, in which the author aims to categorise and evaluate elements of Central Javanese gamelan music within a Western theoretical framework. This framework, as proposed by Hood, ignited a debate that occupied ethnomusicologists working on Java until the late 1970s, particularly in relation to the study of musical mode (Javanese *pathet*). It was only in the mid 1970s, when ethnomusicologist Sumarsam (1975) reworked Hood’s (1954) idea of ‘nuclear theme’ into his notion of ‘inner melody’ that scholars began to seriously reflect upon indigenous concepts of Javanese gamelan rather than focussing exclusively on Western musicological methodologies.6

According to Sumarsam (1975), ‘inner melody’ is a theory based on the idea that every gamelan musician holds a unique understanding of the melodic line (*balungan*) of any classical gamelan composition (*gendhing*) in his or her head. Furthermore, this conceptualisation is compatible with that of other musicians. Inner melody is thus a shared cultural understanding of what is appropriate, acceptable and melodically harmonious within gamelan performance. Consequently, and by extension, in the late 1970s and 1980s, studies such as those conducted by Sutton (1978, 1979, 1987, 1988), Vetter (1981) and Susila (1987) began to consider the importance of improvisation and variation in Javanese gamelan music, dance and theatre performances.

Despite such research into innovative musical practices, however, ethnomusicologists including Becker, J. (1979), Becker and Becker (1981), Hatch  

(1976), Herbst (1981) and Kartomi (1973a) became critical of what they regarded as the continuing zeal for preservation and cultural comparison in relation to the Javanese performing arts. For example, and criticising this trend, Kartomi (1981: 227) notes that some scholars ‘have indulged in a romantic zeal to save traditional music everywhere from the contamination’ of musical contact with the West. In a similar attempt to develop more culturally sensitive approaches to ethnography, dance ethnographers, such as Kealiinohohmoku (1970), and anthropologists, such as Koning (1980) and Foley (1984, 1985), criticised what they considered to be ethnocentric representations of art and culture.

Following these developments, North American ethnomusicologists began to focus on other aspects of gamelan music: Becker (1983) and Snow (1986) examined the gamelan groups then flourishing in the US, as well as composers such as Lou Harrison, John Cage, Colin McPhee (1947), Steve Reich and Philip Glass who either wrote music for gamelan ensembles or whose compositions were inspired by gamelan music. In addition, ethnographers, such as Williams (1989) and Sears (1989a), concomitantly considered Western influences on Indonesian popular music and performance styles. Such studies aimed to reflect the ‘transnational flows’ of influence (after Eriksen 2003: 4) between Western and Southeast Asian arts, suggesting that an on-going dialogue existed between these unique forms. Meanwhile, other ethnomusicologists and ethnographers, such as Foley (1984, 1985, 1990), Becker, J. (1988), Hatch (1979), Kartomi (1973a), Sears (1989a) and Lysoff (1990) applied Geertz’s (1973) concept of ‘thick description’ by ‘reading’ culture contextually in their analyses of Javanese gamelan compositions, musicians and performance practice.7

Brinner (1995a), Foley (1992), Hughes (1988), Perlman (1994), Sumarsam (1995) and Wong and Lysoff (1991) also contributed to cross-cultural studies in ethnomusicology, while dance and performance ethnographers working in Java (Brakel-Papenhuyzen 1995a, 1995b; Hughes-Freeland 1991) foreshadowed the trend of contemporary research that is now heavily influenced by performance studies paradigms (see, for example, Hahn 2007; Hughes-Freeland 2008a, 2008b; Kisliuk 1997, 1998; Williams 2001). Such a paradigmatic shift led researchers working on Java to reject ethnocentric Western analytical models that they believed were no longer applicable to contemporary studies focusing on the Javanese performance arts.

dance and music in Sunda; Ross (2009) examines mask dance in the Cirebon region of north West Java; and, Lysloff (1990, 1993, 2001) and Sutton (1986) investigate music and dance in Banyumas, also in the northern portion of West Java.

In contrast to the valuable work of the aforementioned scholars, sources relating to East Javanese music and dance performance are limited. Despite the early work of Pigeaud (1938), only a handful of researchers have written about East Javanese dance, music or theatre. Kartomi (1976) examines Reyog, made famous in Ponorogo, East Java, for its enormous tiger-head mask and peacock feather headdress that is used in the folk dramatisation of the notorious fight between evil King Klono and his arch nemesis, Barong; Peacock (1968) investigates traditional East Javanese transvestite theatre (ludruk); Hefner (1987) explores social drinking party dancing (tayub) in Malang; Widodo (1995), writes about tayub in the northern coastal village of Blora (on the border between East and Central Java); and Sutton (1991) provides an overview of Malang-style gendhing. Wolbers (1986) also writes about the Banyuwangi Regency (located at the south-eastern tip of Java) tayub tradition called gandrung but only in order to compare it with Balinese dance practices. Sunardi (2007, 2009, 2010, 2011) and Laronga (currently a postgraduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison) have conducted recent research in Malang, East Java, and around the city of Surabaya, respectively. Although few and far between, the dance, music and performance ethnographies that have been written about the arts of Indonesia have, like similar research taking place in other areas of the world, questioned the historical approaches of ethnomusicologists and anthropologists to the highly constructed and artificial nature of ethnographic representations of traditional cultures.
Approaches to Creative / Reflective Practice

By the early 1980s, in what came to be referred to as the ‘crisis of representation’ (see Clifford and Marcus 1986), scholars began to question the constructed nature of ethnographic writing. Specifically, there were growing concerns about the authority of ethnographies written by researchers who typically visited their fields of study for only limited periods of time. Wishing to represent the cultures they studied in the most responsible way possible, ethnographers now condemned what they saw as the penchant within ethnography to invent, not represent, culture (after Clifford 1986: 2). While outsider observation and participant observation⁸ remain fundamental tools of anthropological research, other more comprehensive, culturally-bound ethnographic tools, such as reflective auto-ethnography, were proposed as alternative methodological approaches through which to access culture (Bochner and Ellis 2006, Kuper 1994, Motzafi-Haller 1997 and Reed-Danahay 1997). Yet, such an approach to fieldwork and the writing of ethnography remains mired in questions of authenticity and authority.

Despite ethnographers who have supplanted ‘participant observation’ with a high level of commitment to cultural membership, others argue that ‘any serious representation’ of traditional cultures ‘must be handled by absolutely authentic performers’ (Cohen, M. 2007: 28). Indeed, the very phrase ‘traditional cultures’ is problematic. Similarly, limiting approaches that construct a ‘fixed, essentialist and bounded concept of “essential qualities”’ are often conflated with ‘such equally problematic ideas as traditional, original and essential’ (Johnson, S. 2000: 279). Approaches that stipulate such essentialised performance also ignore the social

⁸ Participant observation is a technique of field research, used in anthropology and ethnomusicology, in which the investigator (participant observer) studies the life of a group by sharing in its activities (see for example, Clifford and Marcus 1986; Geertz 1973).
facility of embodied practice that may be gained by any practitioner, ‘authentic’ or not, through thorough longitudinal cultural immersion.

According to Reed-Danahay (1997: 100), moreover, cultural membership is determined by the community and through an individual’s act of self-identification. Successful cultural identification, therefore, depends on reciprocal relationships within a community of practice (after Hellier-Tinoco 2003). Indeed, specifically in the performing arts, access to cultural knowledge can only truly be gained through full immersion in a culture because a ‘performance authorizes itself’ (Denzin 2003: 192). The ability of a performance to ‘evoke and invoke shared emotional experience and understanding between performer and audience’ (Denzin 2003: 192) can be produced from an informed perspective based on many years of training and immersion in a particular community of practice. Undeniably as successful as those produced by more ‘traditional’ members, intercultural works produced from this perspective celebrate the authenticity of ‘individuality, freedom of expression and personal creativity’ (Brennan 1999: 143, cited in Wulff 2002: 130).

**Intercultural Performance, Hybrids and Syncretic Theatre**

This project examines the challenges of presenting intercultural works whose goal is contextually relevant performance art. Aiming neither to celebrate the ‘other’ nor the ‘exotic’, the work produced as part of this research does not ‘appropriate’ nor show disrespect towards the culture to which it owes its cultural framework, its musical foundations and its gestures. The challenge has been to use traditional materials in non-traditional and context specific ways. Following the practice of ‘intercultural’ performances that emphasise the integrative or, alternatively, the disjunctive ‘[b]etween or among two or more cultures’ (Schechner 2002: 226), the works aim to do more than re-present cultural artefacts. Unlike ‘multicultural’ performances that
showcase the cross-influences between various ethnic or linguistic groups in multicultural societies (Pavis 1996: 2), therefore, this kind of syncretic theatre aims to create new artistic conjunctions.

Postcolonial societies often create theatre that incorporates ‘indigenous material into a Western dramaturgical framework’ (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 36). This process attempts to ‘recode’ indigenous cultures. Within such a paradigm, many artists and composers have historically created intercultural works of music and theatre inspired by the Oriental arts that present a ‘creative reinterpretation of heterogeneous cultural material’ (Pavis 1996: 8) but lack the ‘seamless fusion’ (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 49) essential to effective syncretic theatre. Such artists can, and often do, appropriate raw materials from cultures in which they are not fully immersed. Indeed, the appropriation, or ‘contextless borrowing’ (Latrell 2000: 48), of elements of the ‘Oriental’ arts in Western theatre by those without long-term community associations remains particularly contentious.

Considered pioneers of intercultural theatre and art, influential theatre practitioners, such as Meyerhold, Eisenstein, Brecht (1964) and Artaud (1958), have also been accused of misunderstanding much of what they appropriated. For example, Bharucha (1984: 3) suggests that Artaud, who first experienced Balinese dance-theatre at the World Exposition in Paris in 1931, viewed ‘oriental theatre’ merely as a ‘magical storehouse of ancient rhythms and gestures shared by diverse theatres from the East’. Undeniably, however, these artists were fruitful catalysts for the development of new theories and novel theatre practices (Barba, Dasgupta, Fersen and Marranca 1984: 12) because they reimagined the ‘lived, sensate fabric of that borrowed cloth’ (Dasgupta 1987: 11). Questioning who is advantaged by this ‘thrust toward the integration of cultures’ (Breuer, cited in Cody 1989: 62), scholars
continue to query the right of well-intentioned artists to manipulate and appropriate cultural elements from traditions to which they do not belong.

Scholars, such as Bharucha (1984), Dasgupta (1987), Grotowski and Price (1989) and Latrell (2000), indeed vilify the practices of artists who loot, ‘plunder, or pillage’ (Latrell 2000: 48) traditional cultures merely to spur their own creativity. For example, Bharucha (1984) argues that ritual events must retain their cultural context. They are rooted, he says, in ‘spiritual contexts to which they are inextricably linked’ (Bharucha 1984: 13) and ‘nearly always “accompany transitions from one situation to another and from one cosmic or social world to another” (van Gennep 1960: 13, quoted in Turner 1982: 80). Bharucha (1984) further takes umbrage with Schechner’s (1977: 86) assertion that ‘any ritual can be lifted from its original setting and performed as theatre’. Schechner (1977) argues, however, that rituals removed from their contexts retain their theatrical shells and can legitimately be performed. Turner (1982) coins a phrase for just such events: ‘post-industrial liminoid’ performance that resembles ‘without being identical to liminal phenomena’ (Emigh 1996: 191-2).

To argue that cultural borrowing is a one-way phenomenon, that is, ‘something done “by” the West “to” other cultures’ (Latrell 2000: 44), is to deny that cultural appropriations take many different forms. For example, campursari\(^9\) music provides a contemporary example in Java. Combining gamelan music, late nineteenth-century Portuguese-inspired kroncong\(^{10}\) (Becker, J. 1975: 14, Heins 1975) and Western instruments, such as keyboards, drum kits and synthesizers (Supanggah 2003: 3), campursari is perceived by many as inescapably and inherently Javanese. Now extremely popular, and in response to contemporary realities of time, space (most

\(^{9}\) For further discussion of campursari see Mrázek (1999, 2000 and 2005), Supanggah (2003) and Sutton (2010).

\(^{10}\) Kroncong is a musical style that combines gamelan, late nineteenth-century Portuguese music and Western instruments.
urban dwellers live in small homes with little yard space) and money, _campursari_’s flexibility and broad repertoire make it extremely appropriate and fills a need for live performance at important ritual events (after Supanggah 2003: 4).

Ironically, cultural essentialism largely ignores contemporary performance practice (Erdman 1987, Hughes-Freeland 1993, 1997, 2001a, Pemberton 1994) and the ‘continual process of adaptation and authentication of older and borrowed art forms and repertoires’ (Kartomi 1995: 400) that characterises the Southeast Asian performing arts scene. Instead, the intercultural exchange in which ‘an artist borrows performance techniques from a genre outside her own culture’ to insert them into new performance contexts ‘without regard to indigenous cultural meanings’ (Latrell 2000: 48) is condemned (Bharucha 1984, Brown 1998). However, artists – be they Eastern or Western – ‘are not morally obligated to present the “other” in a digested and contextualized fashion’; indeed, to do so ‘defeats the aesthetic purpose of the borrowing’ (Latrell 2000: 49). Nonetheless, intercultural events like Robert Wilson’s _I La Galigo_ (2004) project have caused much debate. This contemporary intercultural vehicle, for example, adopts and presents a performance tradition without the artist’s full immersion in the source culture.

Wilson’s _I La Galigo_ stages cultural material from the performing arts of the Bugis Island in Sulawesi, one of Indonesia’s four larger Sunda Islands situated between Borneo and the Maluku Islands. Wilson’s artistic vision derived its inspiration from a traditional Buginese story. The production itself involved considerable international collaboration of which Wilson was only one significant contributor (Lindsay 2007, Weiss 2008). In fact, two American theatre practitioners developed the show, which was in turn sponsored by an Italian company. A Javanese musician composed the music and performers from all over Indonesia participated in the production (Weiss 2008: 208). Representing the ‘complexities of the Bugis story
in ways that would “make sense” to people who had rarely thought of Indonesia’
(Weiss 2008: 204) was challenging, and, as Weiss suggests, many of the cultural or
traditional elements used in the performance were not Buginese.

In her analysis of intercultural performance, Weiss (2008: 205) argues that
‘hybrids’ are uncomfortable; they highlight issues of authenticity and force questions
about the conflicting perspectives of individual performers, creators and members of
the cultures whose materials have been integrated into the production. Weiss (2008:
204) describes the possible interpretations of such productions as an ‘extension of the
western colonial process; a symbolic ripping off of Bugis culture by Indonesians and
“the West”; a dumbing-down of a complex Bugis story; an authentic representation
of aspects of Bugis culture; or, a vivid example of the possibilities and potential of
intercultural exchange on multiple levels.’ The project that is the subject of this
exegesis faced many of the same challenges as *I La Galigo*.

Like the many audience members who encountered Sulawesi for the first time
in the aforementioned production, in my performance recitals observers encountered
‘my’ Java for the first time. It was imperative, therefore, that I mediate ‘between the
aesthetics of the non-representational, abstract nature’ of Javanese artistic production
and ‘the aesthetic expectations of the audiences’ (Weiss 2008: 228) in the Western
Australian context. Interculturalism and hybridity are problematic only when they
essentialise the boundaries between the artist and the creative material (Weiss 2008:
233). Thanks to the embodied nature of my practice, I inhabit a unique position in
relation to the cultural material that I present. The syncretically creative works
produced for the purposes of the current study thus take a different approach to the
issue of ‘object’ authenticity and the presentation of traditional cultures than that
taken by the producers of *I La Galigo*. Perhaps in contrast to other practitioners
whose approaches to syncretism derive from positions deep within Western theatre
practices and traditions, my approach to syncretism – despite many youthful experiences in Western dance, music and theatre – originates from a Javanese aesthetic.

Multiculturalism and ‘Object Authenticity’

Thanks to my community of practice in Java, and by studying the ‘rules and representations’, I had learned the ‘map of an unfamiliar territory’ (Ingold 1993: 462) that was Javanese society. That is, I had become intimate with the ‘map’ of Java’s cultural heritage. It was only upon leaving the country, however, that I was ‘able to dispense’ with this guide because I had ‘learned the country’ (after Ingold 1993: 462). I understand this metaphor to mean that ‘dispensing with the map’ means working freely within the artefacts of my embodied practice. Yet, works of multiculturalism, by presenting cultural artefacts within the Western academic sphere, come with a burden of authenticity. The burden of ‘object authenticity’ (Steiner and Reisinger 2006: 299) or ‘ethnological authenticity’ (Cohen, M. 2010: 175-6) is to produce performances that ‘provide insights into distant cultures’. Eschewing the ““promiscuity” of hybridity’ (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000: 35, cited in Cohen, M. 2010: 176), Cohen, M. (2010: 176) contrasts ethnological authenticity with ‘jazzing’, that is, a ‘parasitic’ process of ‘vernacularisation in which the exotic is hybridized with the off-beat for the sake of colour and dramatic interest’ (Cohen, M. 2010: 176). Not only do such theories essentialise authenticity, however, but they also deny inevitable cultural processes, such as time passing and traditions shifting. They also repudiate the ‘existential authenticity’ of self-identity, individuality and the personal meaning of ‘being true to one’s essential nature’ (Steiner and Reisinger 2006: 299) that may be derived from creating art.
Despite the undeniably dynamic nature of the performing arts, scholars continue to reify ‘traditional artistic expressions’ and often ignore new or popular forms, recognising as legitimate only indigenous, tradition-bound artists and artistic forms (Kartomi 1995: 400). Admittedly, informed by this Western bias, during my time as a performing artist in Java I ‘craved’ authenticity (after MacCannell, 1973: 601). As a result, I accepted and reified cultural artefacts as authoritative and utterly unassailable. Indeed, it became my rewarding work over many years to reproduce, conserve and resurrect traditional dance, theatre and musical styles.

Such a preservationist approach ‘time stamps’ authenticity onto an object (after Johnson, S. 2000: 281) by implying some immutable point in time at which the cultural heritage clock grinds to a halt. This approach is certainly a legacy of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship whose influences are still felt in the contemporary study of the Javanese performing arts. For instance, early Dutch scholars aimed to sanitise ‘unnecessary cultural accretions’ from traditional gamelan music and performance traditions, and instead invented for them a long and respectable history (Sears 1989a: 123; Sears I989b: 30-31, cited in Schechner 1990: 36). Influential Javanese scholars, such as Sindoesawarno and Martopangrawit – early academics at the Musical Arts Academy of Indonesia (Akademi Seni Karawitan Indonesia or ASKI) in Surakarta, Central Java – likewise adopted Western musicological methods to preserve, authenticate and ‘upgrade’ these traditions (Kartomi 1995: 373). Their focus on gendhing also aimed to reclaim earlier, ‘purer’ forms (Kartomi 1990: 18). In addition, the classification of certain traditions as ‘the noble or beautiful sublime’ (adi luhung) was a sign of the ‘coming of modernity’ (Hughes-Freeland 2001; Pemberton 1994: 53).

Certain ‘revered’ music, dance and song traditions and ‘customary procedures’, such as Javanese wedding practices (Hughes-Freeland 2001: 214), have thus been
classified as *adi luhung*. This tendency clearly reflects a desire to ‘look back upon early nineteenth century Java as a kind of artistic utopia’ (Kartomi 1990: 18). Rather than celebrating a legitimate cultural history, government policies based on this imported principle reflect modern Indonesia’s desire to unify the diverse populations of the archipelago. Designating some things *adi luhung*, reifying and standardising music ‘untainted by foreign influences’, and condemning as ‘unJavanese’ any musical innovation ‘resulting from “contact” between cultures’ (Weintraub 2001: 197) ignores the unique syncretism that has allowed Java, like so much of Indonesia, to embrace centuries of foreign influence.

Never static, Javanese music, dance and theatre have long been informed by an ‘internal dynamism and variability’ (Miller and Williams 1998: 684). Yet scholars continue to decide ‘which elements are appropriate for artistic experimentation by foreigners and which must be left alone for the “natives” to practice undisturbed’ (Latrell 2000: 45). Indeed, these ‘scholars and admirers’ often ‘lament the loss of a paradise’ (Savarese and Fowler 2001: 75) while ignoring the undeniable fact that every healthy culture ignites artists to innovate, create and move on. In reaction to the cultural essentialism taken by earlier ethnographers, beginning in the 1960s, scholars within ethnomusicology proposed alternative approaches to cultural research. Once condemned to observe cultural practices from the outside, scholars began to embrace the now common practice of undertaking practical studies in order to understand the cultural origin of their subjects of research.

**Ethnomusicology, ‘Bi-Musicality’ and ‘Intermusability’**

In the 1960s, two influential figures dominated a debate within North American academia concerning the ways in which ethnomusicologists should conduct fieldwork. On the one hand, Mantle Hood (1960) – an ethnomusicologist
with musicological training – advocated for ‘bi-musicality’. A performance approach to learning non-Western musics, bi-musicality is a process that proposes practical musical studies as an effective research tool. Hood (1960: 55) argues that in order to understand the music of another culture, the researcher must attain a certain level of competence through bi-musicality. The musical equivalent of bilingualism or equal fluency in two distinct musical languages (Hood 1960: 55), Becker, J. (1983: 85) argues that a few years of study can produce neither bilingualism nor bi-musicality. Indeed, bi-musicality – as applied to fieldwork in the 1960s and 1970s – did not necessarily lead fieldworkers to develop high performance skills.  

In contrast to Hood, Alan Merriam (1964) – an anthropologist whose main focus of study was music – called for ethnomusicologists to adopt a more socio-cultural approach to their work (see also Nettl 2008, 2010). Gradually, in the 50 years that followed, the aforementioned paradigms reconciled to the point where, by engaging in the field as performers and apprentices to expert informants, ethnomusicologists now agree that active participant observation allows researchers to produce conscientious ethnography (Titon 2003: 177).

My circumstances are unusual: a Western artist who chose to ‘become a professional instrumentalist or singer competing with others in the country of [her] chosen study’, it was possible by dint of persistent ‘practical studies considerably beyond the requirements of basic musicianship’ (Hood 1960: 58) to attain professional status. Importantly, bi-musicality comprehends more than ‘simply producing appropriate musical patterns at particular moments’ (Cottrell 2007: 89). ‘Bi-musicality or code switching demands social as well as musical ability’;

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11 Nettl (2008: vi) offers an anecdote from his own fieldwork experience that endorses the above critique of bi-musicality. In 1969, and whilst taking Persian music lessons in Tehran, Nettl’s teacher told him he would never become a cultural insider; moreover, he said, any uneducated Persian would understand the music instinctively better than Nettl ever could. From this story, it can be deduced that not only did Nettl’s teacher essentialise ethnicity, but he also did not perceive of Nettl as truly ‘bi-musical’. 
performers must ‘understand a range of conventions and behaviour patterns in order to be taken as accomplished participants in the performance event’ (Cottrell 2007: 89). Many contemporary ethnographers have, despite difficulties, embrace[d] the dialectics of ‘bi-musicality’ and reflective practice in various attempts to produce better ethnography.12

Within the field of ethnomusicology, Baily is a unique researcher in point, having studied and performed the Afghan dutar and rubab13 for over 30 years. Recognised in Afghanistan for his high-level performance skills, Baily is also a vital link to the past; today, few Afghans are able to perform the music Baily learned in the 1970s. Indeed, Baily’s continued performances and his original fieldwork audio recordings are invaluable to preserving and promoting this musical tradition. To account for his unusual position within the music and ethnomusicology worlds, Baily (2008: 136) favours the term ‘intermusability’ over Hood’s ‘bi-musicality’. The phrase is intended to encapsulate the requirement of performers to acquire musical ability by understanding music ‘operationally’ and ‘from the inside’ (Baily 2008: 126).

Baily avers that many of his insights into music in Afghanistan resulted from his performance activities. Musical participation, he suggests, yields data that ‘cannot be collected with the use of any other technique’ (Baily 2008: 126). Indeed, such embodied experiences of ‘learning to perform’ allow the practitioner to explore ‘spatial thinking and active movements’ (Baily 2008: 128). For example, Rice (1994: 83, cited in Baily 2008: 129) notes that adding ‘the hand motions necessary to


13 The dutar is a long-necked two-stringed Afghan lute; the rubab is a three-stringed short-necked Afghan lute.
produce the sounds’ when playing the Bulgarian bagpipes allowed ‘physical behaviour’ to became part of ‘the conceptual source generating musical ideas’.

Similarly, in her thorough study of Japanese culture, Hahn (2007: 59) states that the embodiment of Japanese music and dance facilitates sophisticated reflections on ‘cultural aesthetics, social structures, and interactions’. She argues that dance and music are the physical manifestations of cultural and aesthetic values. Hahn’s work and her ability to express Japanese values through dance and music reflect her performance skills and her understanding of the culture acquired by studying music ‘from the inside’ (Baily 2008: 126).

Such transformations within musical communities, as described by Baily, Rice and Hahn, importantly reference the current project. Indeed, by living and working as a performing artist in Java for 20 years, I established myself unequivocally within a performance tradition not originally my own. Furthermore, adopting this new cultural ‘centre’ (Cohen, E. 1979) legitimised my membership in the Javanese performing arts scene. This in turn, significantly informed the identity and authority that I attempted to establish as a multicultural artist in Perth, Western Australia. Indeed, a select group of scholars and performers, including Baily (2001, 2008), Bakan (1999), Emigh (1979, 1996), Herbst (1981, 1997), Higgins (1968), and Tenzer (1997, 1998) have developed exceptionally high music/dance performance skills that in turn have informed their ethnographic research. They have done so by approaching the cultures they study from an operationally performative cultural lens or perspective. The accomplishments of the aforementioned individuals in their chosen disciplines have produced, for example, Emigh’s (1979, 1996) unique adaption of Balinese mask dance to the American context; Baily’s (2001, 2008), notable and internationally recognised long-term relationship to Afghan music, and the smash Broadway hit musical, The Lion King, which is clearly inspired by
Javanese mask dance and shadow puppetry (Cohen, M. 2007: 355; Taymor 1979). Like the above artists and scholars, my work also explores the representation of culture through an intercultural and ‘intermusable’ approach to Javanese music, dance and theatre.

**Theoretical Framework: Liminality, Cultural Centres and Embodied Practice**

A number of theories provide particularly useful vantage points from which to consider the experiential processes that brought me into the centre of the Javanese performing arts community of practice. Thanks to my longitudinal studies in Java, I embodied the animistic cultural and spiritual ‘centre’ of Java (after Cohen, E. 1979) that accrued thanks to the successive ‘waves of cultural influence’ (Kartomi 1980) brought from India, Europe and the Middle East. I gradually became accustomed to my adoptive East Javanese culture ‘in a sensual, physical manner, like when one is used to walking along a path and one’s body becomes unconsciously familiar with its texture’ (Mrázek 2005: 13). Just as I became familiar with the sensual feel of this life without consciously seeking any formal cultural tutelage, I acquired extensive embodied knowledge of the community by participating in the daily activities of the people around me (after Lave and Wenger 1991: 98). Upon leaving Java, I was initially confused, like other members of the Javanese diaspora, by my ‘hyphenated’ life, that is, I was ‘living in one nation-state, but identifying and participating in the culture of another’ (Johnson, H. 2007: 88). Turner’s (1967: 102) reflections upon the ‘liminality’ of this kind of life are therefore helpful.

Turner (1967) developed the concept of ‘liminality’ from van Gennep’s (1960) theory of the ‘rites of passage’. In his original research, van Gennep suggests three stages that inform such rites: separation or the ‘pre-liminal’, when an individual becomes detached from her previous place in society; marginal or the ‘liminal, when
an individual’s state becomes ambiguous; and, finally, aggregation or the ‘post-
liminal’, when (after completing a ritual) the individual returns to society with a new set of rights and obligations (Turner 1967: 94). According to Turner, the pre-adolescent Ndembu experiences her transformative event within the culture of her birth. Moving outside of her traditional role within society, the youth comes into contact with elements of the sacred and the arcane, then returns as a woman to the centre of her everyday world. Unlike Turner’s initiate, my own transformation was from outside the culture as a ‘novelty’ performer to a more or less full member of the Javanese performing arts community.

This transformation was possible because, like many other ‘moderns’ who feel alienated from their own societies, I initially left the US to overcome what I felt was the ‘inauthenticity of my experiences’ (MacCannell 1973: 589-90). Indeed, I was concerned about the ‘shallowness’ (Cohen, E. 1979: 181) of my life. The many ‘rites of passage’ that I experienced within my new community brought me to the ‘sacred’ that I craved. An ‘existential’ traveller, I embraced the culture entirely, even ‘going native’ (Cohen, E. 1979: 190), supported by my full participation in the myriad ceremonies that became an expected part of my daily life: the monthly offerings we put on the graves of Soleh’s ancestors, the numerous celebrations and rites associated with the births my two children as well as my involvement in the birth and death rites of so many of our neighbours. My participation in the community life of those who were less ‘disinherited’ (Heller 1961, cited in Cohen, E. 1979: 181) than my community ‘back home’, made me feel that I had escaped from ‘chaos into another cosmos’, and from a meaningless to an ‘authentic existence’ (Cohen, E. 1979: 191). For example, in Java it is understood that strictly following the set forms of life-crisis or magical rituals will ‘exorcise preternatural beings’ and protect villagers from illness or bad luck (Turner 1972: 1100).
Finding my spiritual centre ‘in another society or culture’ (Cohen, E. 1979: 182), I mirrored the lives of other alienated individuals who ‘seek to experience vicariously the authentic participation in the centre of others’ (Cohen, E. 1979: 182). Indeed, escaping my own society, I embraced the unique ‘strangeness’ of my ‘elective’ Javanese spiritual centre (after Cohen, E. 1979: 189, 197). Upon adopting my new community, this shifted the location of my personal ‘centre’ to one that, for me, ‘symbolize[d] ultimate meanings’ (Cohen, E. 1979: 181). Likened, phenomenologically, to a ‘religious conversion’ (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 144, cited in Cohen, E. 1979: 189), dramatically, this transformation was a kind of spiritual pilgrimage whereby I found meaning in ‘the context of a vital, mythologically grounded culture’ (Hollis 2005: 11). My quest for existential authenticity and self-realisation was troubled, however, because the ‘centre’ symbolised an ideal that did not, in the end, reflect ‘true’ life. The reality that I lived was not ‘commensurable’ with the ‘high hopes and expectations’ with which I had burdened it (after Cohen, E. 1979: 195). ‘[D]eeply committed to this new “spiritual” centre’ (Cohen, E. 1979: 190), however, I had attached myself permanently to my adoptive life. In submitting myself inextricably to Javanese cultural and social practices I moved from my original outsider position to feel more and more at one with the community.

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ describes non-traditional knowledge acquisition. The theory suggests that the neophyte moves from not knowing to knowing based almost exclusively on informal learning. This theory also offers a situational explanation for how, without any previous cultural knowledge, understanding is acquired through experience within a community of practice. For example, in her discussion of the world of classical ballet, Wulff (1998: 60) notes that the favoured master-apprentice relationship is
particularly important in establishing a dancer’s reputation. Gerstin (1998: 387, 397) similarly argues that relationships among Bele musicians in Martinique are based largely on artistic and social reputations that are established within the community and based on aesthetic judgements. Likewise, Pálsson (1994: 902) suggests that as ethnographic researchers ‘become increasingly involved in and knowledgeable about the activities of others, they move towards the centre and begin to feel “at home”’ in both their bodies and the company of others.

It is possible to draw a parallel between the worlds of classical ballet, musicians in Martinique, the world described by Pálsson and the traditional genre of social drinking party dancing called *tayuban*. In Malang, the hierarchies of age, beauty, ability and ‘length of service’ provide structural organisation within this performance world. In my own experiences of this genre, situational learning and reputation were important to my own early learning processes and the ways in which I began to perform *tayuban* in 1994.\(^\text{14}\) For example, each sponsored performance of *tayuban* typically involves two sessions: one in the afternoon and one in the evening. *Tayub* events are further divided into two sections within each session: an initial performance of the *ngremo* introductory dance\(^\text{15}\) (in which the dancers dress in male-style costumes) that normally fills the first 30 to 90 minutes and the female style *tandhakan* section (in which the dancers dress in traditional skirts and blouses [*kebayak*]) that follows and completes the event. Therefore, two distinct groups are required for any performance event because they perform in turn: younger/less experienced dancers tend to be prominent in the less lucrative sessions. For example, less respected singer-dancers usually perform the afternoon *ngremo* whilst


\(^{15}\) *Ngremo* is performed as a popular introductory dance throughout East Java. Soleh suggests two origins for the dance based on its name: alternatively it is a ‘scarf’ (*sampur*) dance or it is based on an itinerant dance (for more on this point see Sunardi 2007: 318).
older/more experienced dancers feature in the more prestigious and profitable evening performances of *ngremo*.

*Tayub* presentations are thus divided in a way that segregates the most competent performers from those less experienced; ironically, this division provides ample opportunity for advancement in a tradition that is ‘learned but not taught’ (Rice 1994: 65). Indeed, called upon in this way to perform new dances and songs without any formal instruction, I improved quickly. As a consequence, I rapidly gained recognition and was often invited to perform in the more prestigious groups. In the context of this communal and community based practice, knowledge was not a product of institutionalised learning or previous reputation but rather, it was based on determination, conscious imitation, ability and even looks. In many ways, I gained my reputation merely by keeping my head down. Throughout the time that I studied Javanese dance and music, because I was determined to perform as authentically as possible, I learned uncritically by accepting that there was one authentic way to perform. Having gained such a diverse range of skills and having undergone numerous life passage rituals, moreover, I found myself in a unique position.

Nonetheless, when I moved to Australia, I became once more an ‘outsider’. Unlike researchers who experience an ‘instant coming of age’ upon returning ‘home’, I did not experience a ‘communicative metamorphosis’ through which the ‘humble novice’ becomes ‘the tutor’ (after Pálsson 1994: 904). Nor did I feel eloquent in delivering and expressing my life experiences by producing works of critically constructed syncretic theatre based on my embodied knowledge.

My experiences can therefore be described as hermeneutical ‘arcs’ of understanding based on ‘pre-understandings’ (Rice 1994, 1995). Conceptualising and analysing my experiences in such a manner opens up the possibility of new self-understandings and of new ways of being-in-the-world (Rice 1995: 267).
Undertaking this research project, I initially believed that traditional Javanese music and dance had to be presented in a certain way. Then I came to a new understanding: that I could ‘remake myself’ by encountering the world ‘referenced by the text’ (after Rice 1995: 267). Eventually learning to manipulate the artistic license of a fully embodied practitioner, I used the recitals to provide an interpretation of the cultural material and an ‘explanation’ of the text (after Rice 1995: 267). Deconstructing both my legacy as an embodied practitioner and my previously uncritical reification of the Javanese performing arts, this process of critical distanciation (Rice 1994: 6) exposed and loosened the tight knots of my highly self-critical approach to the Javanese performing arts. Feeling less bound by the formal structures that characterise Javanese dance and music, the recital, Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle, was presented from the position of my newly acquired, new ‘pre-understandings’. My desire to develop innovative work in English was based on my embodied practice of the Javanese performing arts. Enriched by reaching into my past, the performances mined my previous interests in theatre, creative writing and poetry.

Chapter Summaries

The following chapters of the exegesis present my life experiences chronologically in order to depict the hermeneutical arcs of understanding (Rice 1994, 1995) that reflect the learning processes of my professional practice. Chapter Two: Black provides essential background on how I initially travelled to Indonesia as a child and what drew me back to Java many years later. Following this introduction, I discuss how I began to learn various dances, such as the traditional masked dance, Bapang and Beskalan, an early Malang variant of tayub social drinking party dancing. As I

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16 I have chosen to capitalise Bapang because the dance pertains to one specific character; I have also chosen to capitalise the dances, Srimpi Limo and Beskalan, because the creation of both are commonly attributed to Ibu Muskayah. Alternatively, I have not capitalised ‘ngremo’ or ‘tayub’ because they are traditional dance genres with many variants and no known originator.
gained experience in these forms, I began to explore other performance styles, such as the unique East Javanese introductory dance, *ngremo*, which also introduced me to the vocal side of the *tayub* tradition. As I gained experience I garnered invitations to perform both *tayub* and as a singer (*pesindhen*) for shadow puppet performances. The chapter closes with a discussion of becoming a guest star (*bintang tamu*) *pesindhen*. Even the fame that I enjoyed as a nationally recognised *pesindhen* could not obviate my struggles with the demon’s circle (*lingkaran setan*), however: that is, the clash between the identity that I tried to construct based on my abilities and the identity that others imposed on me.

Chapter Three: *Yellow* considers the first recital, *In the Demon’s Circle: Love, Lyrics and Lotus Flowers*. Following discussions of how I prepared the recital and my return to Java where I made audio-visual backing track recordings, I discuss my supervisors’ reception of the mini-recital performance that preceded the recital proper by one month. Based on their critical feedback, I undertook significant changes to the recital. I outline these reforms before providing a brief description of the recital itself. The chapter concludes with a summary of how the process of preparing for and reflecting upon the first recital influenced my conception for the second, *Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle*.

Chapter Four: *Red* provides a similar discussion of my preparations for the second recital. A brief overview of Javanese constructions of meaning and expressions of performed mysticism offer necessary background before the in-depth discussion of the recital material that follows. I also provide information on the sacred dances that were incorporated into the recital and the *macapat* sung verse form tradition upon which the recital narrative was based. Following this discussion, the chapter focuses on how the narrative, the dances and the audio-visual musical accompaniment performatively realised the traditional Javanese cultural material.
The chapter concludes with a brief description of the *Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle* performance.

The final chapter, Chapter Five: *Teal*, offers concluding reflections on the process of devising the two recitals and the lecture-demonstration. Returning to the methodologies and theoretical perspectives that have contributed to the project, the chapter offers some reflections on what it has meant to move out, or ‘fall from’, the demon’s circle. The chapter concludes with reflections on the strengths and shortcomings of the project and suggestions for future research. Finally, appendices are provided that include fully annotated programme notes for both recitals with translations of all of the Javanese language texts used in performance. DVD recordings of each recital and the lecture demonstration are provided at the back of the portfolio.
Chapter 2:  
Black – Life in Java, Living the Demon’s Circle

This chapter examines the processes through which I became a Javanese performing artist. The discussion takes a critically analytical approach similar to that invoked by David Harnish (2001) in his discussion of the famous twentieth-century Balinese musician, I Made Lebah. Basing his exploration of Lebah’s life on Riceour’s theory of hermeneutics, Harnish (2001: 22) argues that this art of ‘critical interpretation’ facilitates ‘the door for music performance, and ritual contexts to be “read” as texts’ (Harnish 2001: 23). In addition, Harnish (2001: 23) notes that Geertz's (1973) influential definition of culture as ‘an assemblage of texts’ was responsible for sparking the reflexivity of ‘interpretative ethnomusicology’. Specifically, ethnomusicologists have adapted ‘the reflexive elements of hermeneutics for their work’ in order to situate ‘themselves and their understandings directly into the study’ (Harnish 2001: 23). These ethnographers also try, by writing auto-ethnographic works, to ‘displace’ the notions of ‘subject and object’ (Harnish 2001: 23). In the present study, which likewise positions me as both subject and object, the use of hermeneutical auto-ethnography allows for an interrogation into how the ‘texts’ of my lived experiences have ‘changed over time’ (Harnish 2001: 23).

Whilst living in Java and obtaining advanced performance skills enabled me to move gradually from the periphery to the centre of my community of practice (after Lave and Wenger 1991), each event produced phenomenona that I interpreted at the time according to preconceptions or ‘pre-understandings’ (after Harnish 2001: 24). Indeed, our ‘experience with [each] phenomenon[a] changes us, and affects our interpretation of the world’ (Harnish 2001: 24). Inevitably, the new understandings that I garnered from every cultural experience influenced my subsequent responses.
and interpretations and my relationships with my various communities of practice. These important and meaningful connections served initially to legitimise my identity as a skilled music and dance practitioner in the Javanese context. It ultimately became apparent, however, that this identity was pressed against, and therefore hindered by, a glass ceiling of opportunity that I could not overcome.

Before considering these late-career reflections, however, the chapter first provides background on my long-term association with Indonesia. Depicting the village life that I adopted in 1990, I portray how I first studied various traditional dances and became a professional *tandhak tayub* traditional singer-dancer. Having lived in rural Java throughout my time in Indonesia, I also reflect on the personal and public struggles I faced even upon becoming a nationally recognised celebrity performer. The chapter concludes by returning to a reflection on the hermeneutical arcs of interpretation that pushed me from this national spotlight into an academic, performative exploration of the problematic nature of my personal and professional identities.

**Learning How to Live in Java**

I first lived in Java with my parents and older sister from 1969-1971 when my father received a commission from the Ford Foundation. A visiting professor of economics, he spent one year teaching at Gajah Madah University in Yogyakarta, Central Java, and another at the University of Indonesia in Jakarta. During this time, we enjoyed many opportunities to attend live performances such as the colossal ‘Ramayana Ballet’ tourist extravaganzas held at the Prambanan Temple’s outdoor theatre. Located in the village of Karangasem, in the Sleman Regency that borders the Yogyakarta Special Territory, three contiguous nights of performances are held at the temple over the full moon nights during the dry season. Visually stunning, the
Prambanan performances inspired my sister and me to commence Javanese dance lessons. We first learned female-style dances and then, when we moved to Jakarta where teachers were less concerned about maintaining gender distinctions (our teacher in Yogyakarta would only teach us female-style dances), I began to learn the improvisational style of the heroic white monkey, Hanoman.¹⁷ During this seminal period, I also became enraptured with the female vocalists we often heard on the car radio on the way to and from the performances we attended. As a result, I declared that I would one day become a pesindhen too.

Our experiences in Indonesia significantly affected my entire family and when our tour ended, we maintained close connections with the large Indonesian student community at the University of Wisconsin where my father returned to work. When my parents accepted another teaching position in Indonesia in 1986 at Andalas University in West Sumatra, I joined them in Padang for eight months. During this time, I continued to develop my Indonesian language and traditional dance skills.

As a consequence of my continuing interest in performance, folklore and Indonesia, and following the first year of my postgraduate studies in anthropology at the University of Virginia, I took the opportunity in 1990 to attend a summer intensive Indonesian language programme. Held annually during June and July, the programme was, at this time, hosted by the Teacher’s College (Institut Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan or IKIP) in Malang, East Java. Unsure about continuing with my academic studies, I intended to stay in Java, move to Yogyakarta, and study Javanese dance. It was serendipity, then, that introduced me to the village of Tumpang when our group of language students attended a masked dance drama performance as part of the program enrichment activities. We were taken by minibus to attend the performance at the Mangun Dharma Art Centre (Padepokan Seni Mangun Dharma

¹⁷ Hanoman is a Hindu deity and a central character in the Indian epic, the Ramayana. In this narrative, Hanoman leads Prince Rama's war against the demon king, Rahwana.
or PSMD) that had been established in 1989 in response to the closing of the only theatre in Tumpang and was owned by M. Soleh Adi Pramono (Soleh).

I was fascinated by many things at the performance: the intricate ‘interlocking’ (imbalan) rhythms\(^{18}\) of Malang-style gamelan music (krucilan) that features dense gong cycles and fast, interlocking saron parts; the rhythmic krincing sound of the bells fastened around the dancers’ ankles; and, the female vocalist who embroidered the puppeteer’s sung poetry (sendhon)\(^{19}\) with her own melodic phrases. Slipping into this magical world as it brought back romantic images from my childhood years in Central Java, I was equally impressed by the poise with which Soleh, who also performed the role of the dhalang, coordinated the mysterious and magical event that we had just experienced. After the performance I asked Soleh, therefore, if he would be willing to give me dance lessons.

Following Soleh’s suggestion, I returned to Tumpang a week later on a sunny June day and observed the last hour of Sunday morning childrens lessons. At the end of their lessons, the child dancers drifted home to lunch and midday naps. Soleh then performed brief dance snapshots to graphically assist me in deciding which dance I wished to learn. As he first showed me the slow precision of the Central Javanese style, Soleh seemed as intricately carved as the masks that lay piled on the coffee table; when he then performed the crisp and angular precision of the East Javanese masked dance, Bapang,\(^{20}\) it became my spontaneous choice: exuberant, irreverent, full of mischief (see figure 2). I was intoxicated by the exotic novelty of my

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\(^{18}\) Imbal is a counterpoint technique in which one saron alternates between two pitches two steps apart, playing on the beat. The second saron plays one note higher on the off beats making a fast, flowing composite melody.

\(^{19}\) Typically denotes songs sung by a puppet master during a performance of shadow puppetry or mask dance drama to provide narrative content.

\(^{20}\) The Panji story cycles are found throughout Southeast Asia, and Prince Panji is said to be a reincarnation of the Mahabharata’s Arjuna. Accompanying him are Gunungsari, his loyal subject and the leader of the military, and Patrajaya, his fool sidekick. The stories tend to focus on the troubles caused by Bapang and Klono, Panji’s arch nemesis, both ‘from the other side of the water’ (tanah sabrang).
surroundings: the sweet, unfiltered coffee that we spilled into our saucers to cool; the children who stared at me wide-eyed in the doorways; the beauty of Soleh’s own physique appearing so much larger than life as his sleekly polished movements punctuated the recorded drumming patterns of the gamelan musical accompaniment.

When I met Soleh in July 1990, he held a position in the performing arts department at the IKIP teacher’s college (now the University of Malang or UM) where my studies were also based. In addition to his academic position, Soleh enjoyed a reputation as a skilled choreographer whose ‘new creations’ (kreasi baru) were structurally and organically based on the foundations of traditional dances. Indeed, he was presently enjoying a commission to create the Malang Regency (kabupaten) submissions to the annual East Java Arts Festival to be held in Malang in July of 1990. I, therefore, had the opportunity to attend a number of formative Festival events. For example, a performance of traditional music theatre (kethoprak) that I enjoyed one evening rekindled my childish ambition to learn Javanese singing (sindhenan) as well as traditional dance. After the language program ended and my fellow students returned home, I chose to remain in Java for another six months.

Rather than moving to Central Java as I had initially planned, instead I rented a room as a ‘boarder’ (anak kos) at one of Soleh’s cousin’s houses in Tumpang. While it eventually became evident that Soleh had a wife and children, despite this disturbing revelation, during this time I began to take on many of the expenses and responsibilities of running the art centre. I believed in Soleh’s mission and his strength of purpose. His extreme ambition, and the cultural ‘centre’ (Cohen, E. 1979) that he embodied so thoroughly and with which he enveloped me, made taking on his mission to promote and preserve the traditional arts of Malang seem not like a burden but the most obviously righteous choice. After a year in East Java, I returned to the US long enough to write and defend my master’s thesis, put my belongings
into storage and sell my car. The possibilities for a meaningful future meant returning to Java and marrying Soleh; I planned to transplant myself indefinitely into this new community.

**Learning Bapang**

When I returned to Tumpang in 1991, I continued to learn largely uncomplicated and localised dances in the village setting and I continued to perform *Bapang* (see figure 2). My dance teachers counted out the beats, first without cassette accompaniment and then with recorded music. Once I was competent performing in this way to cassettes, I was invited to relaxed, largely unprofessional village (*kampung*) events, such as local Independence Day (*Agustusan*) celebrations\(^\text{21}\) that usually begin around 18 August and continue into September. These performances, which include celebrations such as weddings, circumcisions and ritual purification ceremonies, also increased my confidence and sense of ownership towards the dance and its character. My fellow performers were predominantly child dancers and fellow students at the PSMD, and for the most part I learned like any other beginning (child) dancer. Yet because the Javanese believe that each mask holds the spiritual potential of each particular character, performing masked dance successfully demands that one become a ‘worthy receptacle for the spirit’ of the mask (Schrieber 1991: 27). It is believed that one may therefore appeal to the spirits of the masks. For example, Panji may enter a mask in performance if plied with enough incense smoke, prayers and cemetery visits. Then the dancer becomes a ‘groove worn deep in soft wood’ (Schrieber 1991: 27) and dances as if she were embodied by Panji’s spirit. Initially unconcerned with this spiritual dimension, however, my learning processes were like those that I had experienced as a small child.

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\(^{21}\) Indonesians celebrate Independence Day annually on 17 August.
In Java, dance is taught by example in the same way that children are socialised or ‘become Javanese’. Children up to a certain age, in fact, are given enormous leeway because they are not yet considered ‘people’ (wong). Indeed, only by learning appropriate social skills and becoming competent in the different levels of Javanese are they considered wong. Having learned this was as a child, therefore, I was not surprised with the ways in which my Javanese teachers instructed me. Because my abilities were on a par with those of a child, I was treated accordingly. For example, on many occasions Soleh wandered off during lessons to buy cigarettes, drink coffee, have lunch or even take a nap at one of his cousin’s houses. He expected me to work out the latest section of the dance that he had taught me before he returned, only then did he correct my most glaring mistakes. Soleh’s penchant to teach globally with little correction and his assumptions that I would eventually correct myself by observation were based on cultural norms. The peripheral participation (Lave and Wanger 1991) through which I gained access to cultural knowledge made it clear to me that there was really only one aesthetically
correct way of performing. Only when I had attained a sufficiently aesthetic level did my teachers address the finer details of my performance.

Fortunately for me, I was a good mimic and even with minimal instruction I was able to successfully execute traditional Javanese dance moves. When I stood behind my teachers and passionately mimicked their every body shift or pause, I was, in fact, also being socialised. For example, Soleh told his students that three elements define accomplished dancers: movement (wiraga), tempo (wirama) and feeling (wirasa). According to Soleh, the seamless marriage of these characteristics is the artistry of a truly embodied Javanese arts practitioner. When I started learning dance moves, therefore, I aimed to maintain a correct depth of plié (mendhak) and hold my body upright, torso strong and unmoving. I also practised gracefully moving my hands and wrists in intricate patterns whilst sculpting my arms according to the aesthetics that defined the characteristics of each dance. For example, in a strong male style (gagahan), the upper arms are raised high, hands held in fists with the chin erect. A refined male-style (bambangan), however, requires a more contained stance and a less aggressive demeanour. Refined female styles (putri) and beastly animal or ogre (buto) dances fall on the opposite spectrums of appropriate dance and body aesthetics. I consciously made my movements mirror those of my teachers as closely as possible.

Despite learning to move correctly, I continued to struggle for a long time with tempo.\(^{22}\) In particular, I was confused as to how my teachers resolved dance phrases within the framework of the gamelan music’s colotomic structure, that is, how specific instruments mark established intervals of time within the music. The placements of these markers within the overall musical structure were thoroughly

\(^{22}\) Having played in classical and jazz ensembles throughout my childhood and into college, this training in Western music gave me a foundation on which I was able, eventually, to build an understanding of Javanese musical patterns and cycles.
embodied by the experts with whom I studied. I found myself frustrated, therefore, when my instructors invariably changed the beat on which they initiated dance phrases in relation to the music’s colotomic structure. To them, it made perfect sense; to me, it made the dance phrase almost impossible to memorise.

Every dance teacher not only has her own style, but she also often unconsciously changes her interpretation of any given dance from one day’s performance or instruction to another. Despite my instructors’ aesthetic flexibility as to when they initiated a dance phrase (for example, on count 4, 5, 6 or 7), however, every phrase must resolve (by arriving at a static position) at certain, significant points in the music. For example, it is aesthetically appropriate within East Javanese dance to complete a movement phrase on or before the final gong stroke of a composition. In this circumstance, the final gong is often described as the equivalent of a grammatical ‘full stop’. Similarly, small phrases within a larger dance segment may be resolved on the musical ‘comma’ as indicated by the striking of the kenong. The imperative to complete a dance move within the structure of the musical phrase is invariable. Nonetheless, and even though the dance phrase was sure to end before the final gong, every time my teachers revised a dance with me there were subtle (and not so subtle) differences in how they chose to initiate a particular dance phrase or sub-divide it (see also Roberts 2001). I wish that I could blame the poor quality cassette recordings and the distortions caused by the decrepit tape players. Certainly, they did nothing to ameliorate my confusion. Still, it took a long time for me to learn to appreciate and be able to manipulate the flexibility of various music and dance structures enough to become a truly embodied practitioner.

East Javanese music is particularly notorious for its flexibility, its dynamics and its quixotic tempo. Only by truly embodying the exigencies of the colotomic

23 The kenong, of which there are several in a gamelan ensemble, is one of the smaller gongs typically used to mark internal phrases within a larger gendhing structure.
structures may one expect to perform well. The skilful dancer expresses herself by artfully manipulating the tempo (wirama) and by phrasing her movement within the aesthetic parameters of each musical phrase.\textsuperscript{24} Indeed, the competence of accomplished performers who embody the rasa, feeling or ‘inner melody’ (Sumarsam 1975), of drum cues, transition movements and tempo changes distinguishes them from those who do not.

To further improve my performances of Bapang, and with the aim of developing rasa, I visited the village spiritual elder (empuh) Grandpa (mbah), Karimoen. When I commissioned a mask from mbah Karimoen, he made offerings to the traditional ‘owners’ of the mask (the ancestral spirits) and, by holding the mask over burning incense, ‘filled’ (ngisi) it with spiritual potential (see figure 3). In recognition of my progress, and as a next step in my development as a masked dancer, mbah Karimoen also taught me a pre-performance prayer, instructed me in appropriate ascetic deprivations that would make me a better dancer, and invited me to perform (both initiation and exam) at one of the monthly mask dance tourist presentations that his group held in his village of Pakisaji, South Malang. The successful performance helped to further entrench the practices and beliefs of the community into my psyche, making them an integral part of my everyday life.

\textsuperscript{24} See Herbst (1997: 65-66) for similar discussions of phrasing within Balinese dance.
The ways in which I learned to dance, and my transitions from one performance style to another, were not in themselves unusual. In fact, my progressions within the live performance world mirrored those of many other novice performers in Java. I was unusual, however, in that Javanese children learn to sing and dance whilst at school; I started training as a serious dancer and singer in my late twenties. Unlike the function of the traditional arts in many Western cultures, moreover, in Java the performing arts, artists and traditional forms are intimately connected with everyday life. Most aspiring pesindhen, drinking party tandhak tayub, musicians and dancers gain experience performing as part of their primary school curricula and by participating in local community events.

Having achieved a certain level of professionalism by the time they reach high school, children often drop out of school before graduation in order to dedicate themselves full time to the performing arts. For example, tandhak tayub often start performing in their early teens, perform for 10 to 20 years and retire in their early thirties as subsequent generations of beautiful young singer/dancers push them aside.

Figure 3. ‘Feeding’ the Bapang mask. Photograph by Sonya Condro Lukitosari and used with permission.
or as they weave in and out of marriages to men who forbid them from working. In contrast, accomplished singers confident in advanced and structurally complicated gendhing (pesindhen gendhing) sustain extended performance careers. They are valued for their experience and ability and not only for their physical appearance.

I knew that I had entered the Javanese performing arts scene more than ten years too late, but my dedication and discipline, not to mention my unusual appearance (for example, my blue eyes, copper-coloured [pirang] hair, comparative tallness) and nationality, allowed me to accelerate my learning. Despite my late start, I otherwise learned to perform like most contemporary students of Javanese dance in schools and conservatories around the country. I initially studied most of my dances by memorising movement sequences as they were presented on industrially mass-produced, pre-recorded cassette tapes. As I became more accomplished, I moved beyond the sphere of the so-called ‘cassette dancers’ (penari kaset). Not merely memorising dance sequences without any real command of musical structures, I began to learn from traditional sources without the benefit of pre-recorded, cassette arrangements.

For example, in the mid-1990s, I began to learn the female-style dance Beskalan Putri from retired tandhak tayub, Mak Riati, who was born in the early 1920s and had specialised in this dance in her youth (see figure 4). I never learned just one version of the dance from her and I also learned uniquely different versions of this dance from other ‘traditional owners’.25 In fact, my studies with these artists showed that while the colotomic structure of the musical accompaniment is strict and potentially limiting, the ‘scope for variation available to dancers within the framework’ (Roberts 2001: 7) of dances such as Beskalan is huge. Initially frustrating to the novice dancer, learning within such practice paradigms indicates

25 I specifically learned from the dancers Rasimoen, Chattam and Djupri and Mak Riati.
the scope for variation available to dancers within the framework of any traditional dance. The flexibility within set forms is reflected in contemporary performance practice in Java and was eventually incorporated in my creative performance work.

![Image](image.png)

Figure 4. *Mak* Riati performing *Beskalan* at the PSMD in the early 1990s. PSMD archive and used with permission.

As I began to develop a sense of how either the dancer/singer or drummer may cue tempo changes or initiate a transition movement (*singget*) to begin or end a song or dance section in live performances, my embodiment of the dance tradition improved exponentially. Such skills, called ‘buying and selling’ (*dodol tinuku*) assume that during a performance the leader of the ensemble may, at any given time, be alternately either the dancer (or singer) or the drummer. This allows for the breath-taking spontaneity of live East Javanese performances events. The musical dialogue going on between the performers adds a constant edge of excitement to the performance. It was only when I began to perform to live accompaniment that I
began to appreciate this flexibility as well as the inherent artistic possibilities available to the dancer vis-à-vis her gamelan musical accompaniment.

Assiduous repetition of the dance moves (wiraga) and heightened attention to live performance drum cues and tempo changes (wirama) brought me to a new level of professionalism. As I became more popular, the people who hired me also wanted me to perform dances that are considered more popular rather than the masked dance, Bapang. Bapang, and mask dance in general, is no longer popular – in fact, in Malang (as opposed to Madura [see Soelarto 1977], Bali [see Emigh 1996, Herbst 1997, Kodi, Foley and Sedana 2005] and Sunda [Arjo 1989, Foley 1985, 1990] where it retains its popularity) mask dance is considered ‘old fashioned’ (kuno) and ‘country’ (ndeso), indeed in Malang only old men traditionally performed it. My popularity with the general public added to the pressure that I felt as an adult performer, Soleh’s wife and manager of the Mangun Dharma Art Centre. At the same time, the more immersed I became in the local culture, expectations also grew that I would behave in ways appropriate to my position. For instance, masked dance is not considered classy fare for wedding receptions, the context in which dancers, in general, and I, in particular, most frequently performed. Similarly, performances of Beskalan are now considered rather quaint and tend to be limited to specific ritual contexts. In contrast, ngremo is universally popular throughout East Java. Therefore, when audiences insisted that I dance without a mask, adopt a more ‘acceptable’ performance style and learn dances better suited to my ‘elevated’ position as someone with a recognised role in the community, I bought a new costume and learned ngremo.
Changing Expectations

Unique to East Java, ngremo is traditionally performed as the introduction to performances of shadow puppet theatre (wayang kulit), masked dance drama (wayang topeng), ‘hobby horse’ trance dancing (jaranan), traditional East Javanese transvestite theatre (ludruk), social drinking party dancing (tayub) and ritual performances that ‘feed the gods’. There are many different versions of ngremo. For example, men in the male style, men in the female style, women in the male style and women in the female style. Ngremo also has many regional variations, most popularly, those from Malang, Surabaya and Jombang. Finally, ngremo ‘tembel’ (that is, ngremo ‘with tips’)\textsuperscript{26} is a version specific to tayub.\textsuperscript{27} During performances of ngremo tembel, which often last up to two hours, singing is an integral part of the entertainment. In this particular version, the tandhak take turns singing various gamelan compositions whilst important party guests are invited on to the stage one by one and pay for the privilege of sharing a dance with one or more of the women.

While many different versions of ngremo exist, because a commercial recording was easily purchased at local cassette stores, I learned the Surabaya ludruk style (see figure 5). This is also the version that most beginning dancers learn and perform en masse (ngremo massal) because it omits the singing sections. This male style of ngremo is performed either by men or women dressed to look like men and movements are in the ‘strong male’ (gagah) style. The costume comprises velvet short pants and matching satin shirt, beaded velvet breastplate and wristbands, a long beaded dance scarf, a stylishly tied batik headscarf and a black moustache and sideburns drawn on with a heavy black makeup pencil.

\textsuperscript{26} When guests are invited on to stage to dance during the ngremo or tayub portions of the evening, they are expected to give money to each of the tandhak and make a contribution to the musicians as well.

\textsuperscript{27} For more discussion of ngremo see Peacock 1968 and Broto 1991; for discussions of ngremo tembel see Palupi 2008, 2011 and Wilson 2003.
Figure 5. The author performing *Ludruk*-style *ngremo*. Photograph by M. Soleh Adi Pramono and used with permission.

The association of traditional dances with the realm of the spirits meant that I was called upon to perform my dances in the most traditional way possible. For example, traditional *ngremo* and *Beskalan* dancers in Malang, like other versions of *tayub* found throughout the Indonesian archipelago, always sing. When I first performed to live gamelan musical accompaniment, therefore, again the public expectation of me as a respected, adult performer was that I would do the ‘grown up’ version of *ngremo* in which singing is expected and essential. As a professional, I was expected to perform *ngremo* and *Beskalan* in the ‘correct’ way, that is, I was expected to both dance and sing. There is, in fact, an enormous distinction made between female dancers who perform the cassette version of *ngremo*, wear a long-sleeved *ludruk*-style costume that covers their arms and who do not sing, and the singer-dancers who dress daringly, bare their arms, show their armpits and sing and
dancing with paying guests (see figure 6). Female performers in the latter category are, in fact, *tandhak tayub*, and as such they wear the contemporary *ngremo tembel* costume that features a universally appealing subverted sexuality poured into body hugging beaded velvet breast cloths and beaded bolero.

Often called upon to perform both *ngremo* and *Beskalan*, ironically, this made me unique amongst my peers for a number of reasons. Unlike most of the women who currently perform *tayub*, I was trained as a dancer before developing my skills as a traditional singer. Whilst both *tandhak* and non-*tandhak* performers present *ngremo* in Malang, most of the dancers who perform *Beskalan* in Malang are not trained *tandhak tayub*. As a consequence, I was unlike anyone else performing in Malang at the time. I alone fully embodied the *tandhak* potential of traditional dances such as *Beskalan*.

![Figure 6. The author performing the dance *ngremo tembel*. Photograph by Dadit Hidayat and used with permission.](image)

**Performing Tayub**

Acquiescing to popular demand, I performed *ngremo* almost to the exclusion of any other dance. In response to the expectation that I perform *ngremo* in culturally
appropriate ways, and therefore sing, I commenced study with a local music authority (*empuh karawitan*), Bapak Sumantri (or *Pak* Mantri), a civil servant who worked at a local government tourist park. To perform *ngremo* properly, I learned the unique singing style called ‘to *ngidung*’ usually performed to the East Javanese composition *Jula-Juli.* In addition to learning *ngidung*, and because I had now begun to perform at *tayub* events (see figure 7), I also studied the vast repertoire (lyrics and dance moves) of popular songs and commonly requested musical pieces or *gendhing*. Indeed, a performance tradition inextricably linked to magic and mysticism, live performances of *ngremo, Beskalan* and *tayub* are most often produced as part of mystical ritual events.

Figure 7. The author performing *tayub* at Bintang Beer factory. Photograph by unknown. Collection of the author.

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28 The colotomic structure of *Jula Juli*, normally played in the *slendro* tuning mode of *wola gedhe*, comprises 16 beats with gong strokes at the end of each 8 beat segment.
Because *tandhak tayub* bodies are ‘the performing object…without screen or mask’ (Cohen M. 2002: 172), they enjoy an unmediated relationship with the gods and ancestors. Traditional audiences continue to sponsor ritual events because they believe that by giving money to *tandhak* the gods will be appeased and bring them good luck and fertile crops.

Certainly, magic continues to figure significantly in the lives of many traditional Javanese and singer-dancers are considered much more than the pourers of drinks and dance partners to drunken men. *Tandhak* retain the vestiges of their magical roles as fertility symbols and as mediums to the gods and ancestors. For example, in Tumpang, *tayub* singer-dancers always perform at seasonal village events, such as fertility and harvest rites, held annually for the benefit of the community. It is considered, therefore, an honour and an obligation for the *tayub* artist to attend such important events, be they performed at ancestral tombs, river sources or sacred groves. The irony is that while, as a group, *tandhak* are revered for their historically powerful cultural roles, I often heard ‘elite’ musicians, such as Pak Mantri (Sumantri, pers. comm. n.d.), condemn them individually, stereotyping them as uneducated mercenaries who participate unrepentantly in anti-Islamic activities that promote drinking and licentiousness.

If I had not been initially blinded by the exoticism associated with *tayub*, I might have recognised sooner that I would never assimilate to the cultural norms of the women in this community. However, the mythology that surrounds *tayub’s* history and the unique position *tandhak* enjoy within the Javanese mystical cosmos seemed infinitely to fulfil my quest for the sacred (Cohen, E. 1979). Therefore, when I entered the world of *tayub* to make a living, and because I enjoyed the challenge of performing a constantly innovative and changing repertoire, I had no academic mission that might have bolstered me. Nothing made the quotidian realities of the
work more bearable nor allowed me to see the daily grind of endless sleepless nights as ‘fieldwork’. On the contrary, I bore the indignity of the women’s intolerance towards me. Scorned for my mistakes in formal Javanese,\textsuperscript{29} I was also given imperious lectures on how sponsors hired us based on our abilities and our ‘class’ (implying that the speaker’s standing was higher than mine) and that we were paid accordingly.

In Java, I enjoyed being in popular demand but the work conditions among these ill-tempered \textit{tandhak tayub} caused me significant grief. Despite my ambivalence, however, \textit{tayub}’s mystique kept me going until I had gained enough notoriety as a \textit{pesindhen} to be popular enough that I felt I could afford to refuse \textit{tayub} engagements and still work regularly. Moreover, my intoxication with the unique rawness of the rough \textit{tayub} events, my own ‘sacred’ nature as a ‘vessel of the gods’ and my passion for performing compelled me to not give up \textit{tayub} for quite some time. Until I did eventually retire from \textit{tayub}, however, I was careful to avoid the inevitable confrontations in which even \textit{tayub} ‘dressing rooms’ were sites of conflict.

While similar in ‘mystique’ to Western ballet dressing rooms, for example, \textit{tayub} dressing rooms are not ‘warm and friendly’ or ‘safe spaces’ where ‘masks fall off’ (Wulff 1998: 93-94). Rather, because the most public spaces were considered appropriate makeshift dressing rooms, ‘both the public and the private domains at once interacted and encroached upon each other’ (Pioquinto 1995: 66). Indeed, the other \textit{tandhak} and I often sat in front parlour ‘dressing rooms’. In such circumstances, \textit{tandhak} are on display from the moment they arrive at a sponsor’s house. Occasionally, we arrived as party helpers were still hurriedly covering the

\textsuperscript{29} Javanese is spoken using three distinct styles or registers depending on social context. Each register low (\textit{ngoko}), middle (\textit{madya}) and high (\textit{krama}) employs its own vocabulary and grammatical rules. The ability to correctly use the different levels is highly esteemed.
cold cement floors with rugs and woven mats borrowed from the local mosque or women’s organisation.

Setting up our stations along the wall, our costume bags jutted into the middle of the floor. We took our positions by rank, squeezing in next to friends, if lucky, or, alternatively, finding a secluded corner where we might not draw unwanted attention or scowls from the older performers. The walls were divided into segregated sections by group: the select ‘top-tier’ women who performed the evening ngremo (generally the oldest and most experienced) took the best spots with the most light, while the younger, less experienced or less lofty tandhak hugged the edges of the room.

Backs to the wall, we perched travelling mirrors on top of our sturdy make-up boxes to free our hands. Drawing on eyebrows, heavy eye shadow and lipstick, finally we teased the front sections of our hair into high lacquered crescents (see figure 8). We applied our makeup and dressed whilst hordes of small children and grandmothers carrying small babies in batik slings watched through the doorways and the windows. Party volunteers filled what space was left in between all of our bags with a revolving, ever-replenishing supply of drinks, snacks and rice dishes. Although ‘the physical discomfort or inconvenience engendered by [our] situation was simply a temporary condition resulting from working conditions that were themselves temporary’ (Pioquinto 1995: 66), the reality of the hours we worked was a constant source of conflict.
Because of the seasonal nature of performance in Java, popular *tandhak* often work non-stop for months on end. Certain months contain a large number of days considered propitious for celebrations, such as weddings and circumcisions, and are, as a result, especially busy seasons for performers. Compounding this busyness, and for a number of reasons, *tandhak* are generally reluctant to give up work. Aside from the obvious monetary incentives, regional *tayub* communities are small and close knit. Called ‘social people’ (*wong blater*), the men associated with *tayub* are often village heads and police chiefs. Without fail, these men attend and contribute to functions held throughout their communities. Many are also married to *tandhak* and, consequently, take on the responsibility of driving their wives from one engagement to the next.

The close nature of this community means, therefore, that well-connected *tandhak* are expected to perform or be seen at every important event. Accordingly, many *tandhak* practically live on the road. During busy seasons it is possible to be hired to perform almost every day for weeks on end. Not only are the hours gruelling...
but performances are spread throughout the region, and therefore often involved long commutes between performances. Accordingly, tensions among performers tended to run fairly high. Expected to arrive at each sponsor’s house by 11am to dress in time for the afternoon session’s 1pm start, *tandhak* enjoy only a brief respite from 5.30pm to 7pm before preparing again for the evening performance. During this short break, we *tandhak* would remove our costumes and hairpieces. Comfortable in loose housedresses, and with our costume bags for pillows, we would stretch our legs into the middle of the floor or up against the wall. Covering our faces with hand towels enough to block out the light and the noise, we could catch an hour of sleep before waking to bathe, eat and begin re-applying make-up before dressing for the evening session that began with *ngremo tembel* at 9pm. The *ngremo* was followed by the female-style *tayub* at 10.30pm or 11pm depending on how many guests were called on stage to dance during the *ngremo*. The evening usually finished by 2am or 3am.

While *tandhak* work until the early hours of the morning, the life of the village *pesindhen* (informally, *sindhen kampung*) is surely harder.

Generally, rural East Javanese *dhalang* hire two or three singers with the understanding that at least one will dance the *ngremo* then change into the long-sleeved, lace blouse (*kebayak*) and batik wrapped skirt (*kain panjang*) worn by *pesindhen* and join the other singer(s) on stage for the rest of the night. In this case, younger *pesindhen* tend to perform the introductory *ngremo*. The older and more accomplished *pesindhen* are expected to perform the ‘overture’ music as a prologue to the start of the evening performance. As a consequence, *pesindhen* for village *wayang kulit* performances are on stage long before the appearance of the *dhalang*. 
They perform all day from 11am to dusk and from 7pm to the conclusion of the show at approximately four am.\footnote{Prior to the rise of a more fundamentalist Islam that dictates ending before the morning call to prayer, wayang kulit performances often went till 7am or later.}

While some tandhak were also accomplished singers of gendhing and occasionally performed as pesindhen, most sindhen kampung were considered tandhak manqué, that is, not skilled, attractive or brave enough to perform the spiritually charged role of a tandhak tayub. These pesindhen are universally paid significantly less than tandhak for performance hours that are routinely longer. They also do not earn the extra tips (tembelan) that are a significant perk of tayub performances. Because pay rates tend to be standardised within each performance community, it is difficult, therefore, to effect pay raises. In leaving the world of tayub when I finally escaped by ‘retiring’ in early 1999, I continued to perform ngremo as the overture to all-night shadow puppetry performances.

I admit that I perversely missed the frontier feeling of tayub’s raw vibrancy. Luckily, I was the popular choice among the many dhalang who continue to present traditional ngremo and ngremo tembel before the start of an evening wayang performance; moreover, I continued to enjoy the adrenaline associated with performing unscheduled and often unrehearsed songs and dances on demand during the ngremo tembel section. Accepting invitations to perform ngremo for wayang performances, however, usually meant staying for the entire evening. As a consequence, and in order to be able to fully participate in such performances, I chose to learn the wayang kulit repertoire, both East and Central Javanese (see figure 9).
Becoming a Pesindhen Gendhing and Bintang Tamu

When I began to sing the most difficult (or most ‘refined’) wayang kulit repertoire as a quasi ‘culture bearer’ (after Dunbar-Hall 2001), I continued to visit Pak Mantri twice a week for sindhenan lessons. Pak Mantri is authoritative in both East Javanese and Central Javanese performance styles and during these lessons, at which I sang to Pak Mantri’s gender\(^\text{31}\) accompaniment, we explored both performance repertoires. The extensive Javanese gendhing repertoire is divided in a number of different ways: in addition to regional differences, pieces are categorised by tuning system, slendro and pelog,\(^\text{32}\) and mode (laras or pathet), which is usually determined by predominant tones, tonics and final gong stroke tones. East Javanese practice identifies the modes sepuluh, wolu gedhe, nyonga, wolu miring, and serang,\(^\text{33}\) whilst Central Javanese

\(^{31}\) A gender is a metallophone consisting of 10 to 14 tuned metal bars suspended over a tuned resonator of bamboo or metal. These are struck with a two mallets made from padded wooden disks.

\(^{32}\) The slendro has five fairly evenly spaced notes to an octave, whereas pelog has seven notes uneven intervals to an octave.

\(^{33}\) Traditionally only two pelog modes, bem and barang, were identified. For more discussion of East Javanese gendhing see Sutton (1991, 1993) and Sunardi (2007).
identifies the modes *manyura* and *pelog barang*, *nem* and *sanga* (in *pelog, pelog lima*).\(^3^4\)

Learning to *sindhen* means studying the various stylistic rules for the composition of musical ornamentation (*cengkok*). Whilst it is appropriate to memorise various ornamentation patterns, these patterns must be individually tailored to the note on which it resolves. This tailoring is also influenced by the character of the note as determined by its position within each *laras* (*pathet*). For example, while the note 6 in the *laras slendro sanga* and in *pelog barang* may resonate on the same frequency, it would be musically inappropriate to sing a *cengkok* fitting to *slendro sanga* whilst performing a piece in the *pelog barang* mode. Similarly, the relative position of the note to the tonic is important: 1 is the tonic in *nyanga* but in *wolugedhe* it is a passing tone. *Cengkok*, therefore, must be tailored accordingly. In addition, there are also many regional differences that distinguish the East from the Central Javanese style. Thus, it would be inappropriate to sing a Central Javanese piece in an East Javanese style with East Javanese *cengkok* or vice versa.

It is typically also East Javanese to end a melodic phrase on or before a *kenong* or final gong stroke and not aesthetically pleasing to end a musical phrase after this colotomic punctuation. In contrast, when singing a Central Javanese *gendhing*, it is appropriate and aesthetically pleasing to finish musical phrases one or two beats after a gong or *kenong* stroke.\(^3^5\) The exigency to perform in culturally appropriate ways pertains to the communal understanding inherent to gamelan performance that Sumarsam (1975) defined as ‘inner melody’. In other words, an accomplished gamelan musician must master the shared cultural understanding of what is


\(^3^5\) See Walton (1987, 1996) for further discussion of Central Javanese *sindhenan* style.
appropriate, acceptable and melodically harmonious in the context of any gamelan composition. It was just as important that, as an aspiring pesindhen, I learned pieces in each particular laras and in both regional styles; indeed, I was often called upon to sing pieces from both repertoires.

Consequently, over the years Pak Mantri and I explored many different gendhing. Moving from simple to more complex pieces, and as I developed a more refined sense of wirama, I gained facility in each performance style by acquiring a collection of appropriate ornamental musical phrases with which to embellish any given piece. During this time I also undertook study with other masters (empuh), such as sung poetry puppeteer (dhalang macapat) Ki Supatman (or Pak Supat), who, like many other dhalang, was also recognised as a shaman (dukun). Pak Supat, ever embodying his singing with the ‘magic and mysticism of the traditional culture of Java’ (Mydans 2001), taught me to sing sacred poetic texts that he accompanied by burning incense to send prayers to the gods and ancestors (see figure 10). Pak Supat often invited me to perform with him. This was particularly the case when well-to-do event sponsors hired the entire PSMD troupe of gamelan musicians to accompany Pak Supat’s macapat performance.

The PSMD was entirely enmeshed in my professional, artistic, cultural and mystical developments. It extended into my emotional life as well – even our home was built as an extension of the performance space. While communal life at the art centre had its pros and cons,36 thanks to Soleh’s respected position in the arts community, I had immediate and easy access to the captivating world of the Malang traditional arts. I did not need to fast-track fame or mystical knowledge (ilmu) by following the old ascetics. For example, by staying awake for three days and nights

36 Almost everyone in our neighbourhood was related in some way to Soleh. The common Javanese value of gotong royong or ‘working together’ meant on the positive side that the community rallied behind Soleh’s projects. On the negative side, it also meant that his extended family assumed my unquestioning financial support.
immersed in a chilly mountain stream or meditating in a secluded ancestral burial
ground. Instead, my complete immersion in the arts, masked dance, ngremo, tayub
and sindhenan brought me recognition and social power, facilitating my trajectory
from obscure village (kampung) mask dancer to regional, transgender tandhak tayub,
and ultimately to nationally respected pesindhen.

Figure 10. Ki Supatman playing siter during a performance at PSMD. Photo by
Ruedi Nuetzi and used with permission.

While my kampung origins defined me for a long time, I bypassed the sindhen
kampung who earn a small income and claim modest prestige. Instead, I developed
as a professional ‘guest star’ (bintang tamu) performer, and my diligent studies
helped me become a highly skilled performing artist. Changing priorities within the
Javanese performance scene, for example, the desacralisation of the traditional arts
(see Munardi 1996 for further discussion), and the rising importance of televised pop
culture) meant that my ethnicity and appearance were not necessarily the liabilities
that I had once felt them to be. Never having been truly accepted into any of the
groups with which I regularly performed (except for PSMD of which I was a star
attraction and recognised managing director), I was finally able to capitalise on my ‘exoticism’ by entering the small, select world of the bintang tamu pesindhen. In contrast to the Javanese ethos which gives precedence to family and community over the individual (gotong royong), it was finally advantageous for me to not fit in. For example, when the then Governor of East Java, Ki Soenarya, invited me in 2000 to perform with him at his government-subsidised, large-scale and televised events, I gained national recognition that led to invitations to sing throughout the Indonesian archipelago. Consequently, I became a popular public figure and performed on national television. Offered fees exponentially greater than those earned by even the excellent pesindhen who accompany prestigious dhalang, I worked significantly fewer hours, arrived by plane and stayed in comfortable hotels while the corps pesindhen travelled by bus and slept in local high schools.

As a result of this work, I became a representative of the traditional performing arts at events throughout Indonesia. For example, in addition to my nationally televised performances, I was invited to appear at government offices, such as the Indonesian National Bank (Bank Nasional Indonesia or BNI), and appear on Indonesian National Television (Televisi Republik Indonesia or TVRI) and National Indonesian Radio (Radio Republik Indonesia or RRI). These broadcast performances, and my increasingly prominent role in the public consciousness, also led to my employment as the host of two televised series on the Surabaya TV station, JTV, the aims of which were to promote the traditional arts of East Java. The first series, ‘Elizabeth Sings’ (Elizabeth Nyindhen) broadcast during 2006-2007, used intimate gamelan accompaniment (cokekan) to perform largely traditional gendhing. I was solely responsible for the artistic content of this weekly series. Although aired regionally, the broadcasts reportedly also reached as far as the islands of Kalimantan and Sulawesi. During sessions of Elizabeth Nyindhen, that I hosted entirely in the
most polite form of ‘high’ Javanese (despite the difficulty some of the younger generation guest singers found in responding to High Javanese), I also interviewed guest artists and performed a significant proportion of the show’s content with the highly skilled, urban Surabaya musicians hired by the studio. The second show, ‘This ’n’ That East Java’ (Campur-Campur Jatim) was broadcast during the second half of 2008 and targeted a younger audience by showcasing the increasingly popular campursari musical style.

Such national recognition did little to dilute the dilemma of my personal authenticity. I have defined this retrospectively as the demon’s circle (lingkaran setan) of my life in Indonesia. For example, well into my studies with Pak Mantri, he suggested that my sindhenan lacked musical feeling and nuance (penghayatan), and that my vocal character (warna suara) was not sufficiently refined (alus). Needless-to-say, this remark – whether intended as constructive or not – sent me into an existential tailspin. Devastated, his comment led me to ask other respected musicians with whom I also performed whether they too thought that my warna suara was lacking. When they in turn said that it was not, this led me to consider that Pak Mantri’s remarks were not a reflection of my deficiencies as a foreigner pesindhen, but rather reflected on the embodied practice that made me sound characteristically East Javanese. I realised that he was taking umbrage with my still evolving ‘bimusicality’ (Hood 1960) between East and Central Javanese performance styles. Not only had I first developed as a vocalist within the East Javanese idiom, but I also had the good fortune to ‘grow up’ as an artist in a community that was fiercely proud of its local heritage and traditions. It was therefore with pride that I sang in the East Javanese style.

While many East Javanese performers have, over the past twenty years or more, embraced the ‘more refined’, ubiquitous and hegemonic Central Javanese
performance styles, the musicians associated with the Mangun Dharma Art Centre were best recognised for their skills in East Javanese mask dance, *ludruk, jaranan* and shadow puppetry. Still, I was determined to become as fluent/competent in Central Javanese *gendhing* as I was in East Javanese. If to perform successfully, that is, to feel artistic satisfaction, in this new performance ‘language’ meant ‘finding, seizing, and realising the inner life’ (inner melody) of a *gendhing* (Weiss 2003: 42), then I was prepared to work tirelessly within the Central Javanese repertoire to learn appropriate melodic ornamentation (*cengkok*) in order to perform it ‘correctly’: seamlessly and flawlessly. My success in developing these skills was arguably, and as a previously mentioned, confirmed by my popularity and by the invitation to become the host of ‘Elizabeth Sings’. I accepted the role that was essentially thrust upon me: I was a foreigner who happened to value something that no longer interested younger generations. It, therefore, became my unsolicited job to uphold certain aspects of Javanese culture, music and language.

Even as the host of this program, the demoralising *lingkaran setan* of my ethnicity apparently still trumped my professional accomplishments. Poignantly, in one particular instance when I had made obvious mistakes whilst performing a complicated *gendhing*, the guest star *pesindhen* who had been invited to participate in that particular episode said to me, ‘oh, it doesn’t matter if you make mistakes, *Mbak*37 Eli’ (emphasis in the original). Perhaps I read too much into this exchange, but at the time I interpreted her statement to mean that for her, it did not matter how badly (or how well) I performed because she could never perceive of my performances as legitimate cultural expressions; she could not see beyond my foreignness. While ‘perceptive people or those who knew me well’ (Kisliuk 1997: 32) might occasionally have recognised my accomplishments and accepted me as a

37 *Mbak* or *mbakyu* is an honorific that literally means ‘older sister’ but is used as a term of address between friends and acquaintances; the comparable term for men is *mas* or *kangmas*. 
member of the Javanese community of practice, many others like my fellow pesindhen ‘resisted my efforts to move beyond being stereotyped’ (Kisliuk 1997: 27). Despite her dismissal of me, however, or perhaps because of it, I was more determined than ever to embody the persona of the refined traditional Javanese pesindhen that I had idealised since childhood.

It never occurred to me at the time, however, to interrogate why I felt such an imperative to come as close as possible to the most ‘correctly Javanese’ way of performing and ‘being-in-the-world’ (Heidegger 1962). Ironically, my desire was in contrast to the many contemporary Javanese who jettison their old belief systems in order to embrace modernisation (modernisasi) and progress (kemajuan). Nor did I question the very premise upon which ‘authenticity’ and performing in an ‘authentic’ manner are constructed. Having thoroughly embraced the Javanese cultural centre and its performing arts, I ardently wanted to make a name for myself as a ‘proper’ singer/dancer pesindhen by being as ‘authentic’ as possible.

Whilst critical feedback on my performances came from experts (empuh) whom I respected as master performers, I felt equally burdened by the ‘cumulative effect of casual listening’ (Herbst 1997: 155) that gave critical authority over me to ‘culture bearers’ (Dunbar-Hall 2001) such as the matrons who hired themselves out at weddings and circumcision celebrations. I believed that their criticisms reflected a true lack of authenticity on my part and I endeavoured to correct my mistakes. However, my efforts to gain experience and improve my embodied practice by sponsoring rehearsals or inviting guest experts were often met with indifference. Dissatisfaction with the glass ceiling that came with being a foreigner guest star pesindhen therefore nagged like a toothache; trying to overcome this obstacle, I ran afoul of the musicians associated with PSMD who, for the most part, did not crave

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38 Dunbar-Hall (2001) uses the term ‘culture bearer’ in contrast to ‘tourists’ who lack access to privileged cultural knowledge.
‘improvement’. Confident in East Javanese repertoire, the PSMD musicians were unfamiliar with many of the pieces that I had introduced as I became more accomplished in the Central Javanese repertoire. At the same time, they did not have a culture of practising merely for the sake of improvement. The intricately woven, multi-layered beauty of gamelan music is ‘collective and social’ (Herbst 1997: 155) however, and, therefore, I was dependent on a community of musicians who did not share my long-term goals nor value learning new repertoire as an end in itself. Their resistance to working on pieces with which they were not already familiar made me feel that I was eternally stagnating in my attempts to improve my professional practice.

Arguably, being foreign was what enabled me to enjoy a successful career as a guest star bintang tamu performer. Yet such apologist rationalisations ignore the general approbation of the traditional ‘culture bearers’ (Dunbar-Hall 2001) who recognised my accomplishments. Throughout my career in Java, therefore, this dissonance fed by my obsession with ‘authenticity’. I harboured a desire to be judged solely on my artistic abilities and not through the fractured prism of my ethnic background.

Defined by this bias, moreover, whenever I failed to produce a performance of appropriate quality, I ultimately blamed my failure on my inability to fully embody cultural authenticity. I felt that the only way to prove myself as an authentic artist in Indonesia was to perform ‘correctly’ and without blemish. Yet, even my ascension to local, regional and national recognition never eliminated what I personally experienced as the ethnocentrism that pervades Javanese society and culture and allowed audience members to judge my abilities through the lens of their ethnic cultural membership. The following quote, for example, by ethnomusicologist
Sunardi (2007: 10) is reproduced at length in order to underscore the Catch 22, or demon’s circle, of my position:

It was the dancing on the video that caused concern. The dancer for the video, Karen Elizabeth Sekararum, drew on movements from her dance teachers Rasimoen, Riyati, and M. Soleh Adi Pramono, in effect performing her own version. Although this is what many dancers in Malang do when they perform, several dancers critiqued her performance for including movements that they claimed did not exist in Beskalan Putri and for not including movements that they argued were part of Beskalan sing asli. I was surprised that they did not highlight what she did correctly, or that she is one of the few dancers to have learned the singing well enough to perform it.\footnote{Footnote in original: Although the sections in which the dancer stops to sing (gandhangan sections) are not part of this performance because the music was recorded for the dance as Didik learned it, she is the singer on the recording. In performance, the dancer can also sing as he or she dances, and Karen sings (or lip-synchs) as she dances on the VCD. When she performs it live, she does perform the gandhangan section.} I suggest that the dancers were critical because they did not find her dancing authoritative enough to be featured on a VCD of Malangan dance, which has the potential to institutionalize that particular performance and thereby impact the selection of tradition. Other dancers seem to critique her performance partly because she is American and is therefore perceived as foreign, despite having resided in Tumpang since 1990. They seemed to react against an ‘outsider’ (and one who is racially different at that) representing and marketing ‘their’ tradition (emphasis in original).

The salient issues of the above quote highlight the indifference, or perhaps just ambivalence, I came to feel were directed at my performances. For, it was the community that pushed me into the spotlight: in such cases as Sunardi narrates, I was one of the few dancers in Malang at the time (and even more so today) who could perform both the singing and the dancing in the traditional way and therefore provide an ‘authentic’ performance (see figure 11). Nonetheless, and although I had learned the dance just as any other traditional performer would do, I was unconditionally
condemned for my ethnicity. Despite the thoroughly indigenous ways in which I learned to dance and sing – imitating my teachers’ dance moves, cengkok style and ornamentation to produce performance artefacts that were as ‘text perfect’ (see Berger 2009) as possible; despite my acceptance and assimilation of traditional, cultural values; despite my desire to be taken seriously as an ‘artist’ within the performance community; despite the years of study, self-reflection, feedback and criticism that I incorporated into my artistic practice, despite all of these things, I felt that I was forever undermined by my ethnicity\(^{40}\) – something I could not change or control – and would never match the cultural ‘ideal’ against which I held myself. The demon’s circle was unassailable.

Figure 11. The author performing Beskalan in the early 2000s. Photo by Katharina Popp and used with permission.

The unique incident described above encapsulates many of the issues that inform this project. It was therefore the culmination of a number of issues that

\(^{40}\) I was much more accepted in East Java than I ever was in Central Java. There are admittedly many more foreign pesindhen in Central than East Java. Nonetheless, ethnicity is regularly invoked during evaluations of singers, be they foreign or merely ethnically not Central Javanese.
ultimately made me decide to leave Indonesia. My 1991 marriage to Soleh had resulted in two talented children who, like me, were deeply invested in Java. They thoroughly enjoyed their dual lives of international school and PSMD after-school rehearsals and performances. However, my relationship with Soleh had long been troubled and remaining in Java meant daily compromise. Nevertheless, for a long time I had chosen to make the best of things in order to continue to stay in Indonesia and maintain my successful career. When I finally chose to divorce Soleh, however, my position in the village where I had lived for so long dramatically changed. Brought about by the removal of Soleh’s ‘protection’, my daughters and I lost our foothold in the community. Indeed, the bulk of our neighbours – many of whom were also Soleh’s relatives – became openly hostile towards us. Not only did they steal from us on numerous occasions (in the full knowledge of the police who failed to fully investigate such crimes), but the ‘generosity’ that many individuals had come to expect of me began to stretch too thin. After more than a year of agonising about the situation, I realised that I had little choice but to leave my beautiful home and relinquish my performance career in Java.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has considered my time in Indonesia, from my early childhood experiences, to moving initially to Tumpang in 1991 and up to my departure in 2010. While I was always committed to PSMD’s mission to promote and preserve the traditional arts, it was the possibility of embracing a new cultural ‘centre’ (Cohen, E. 1979) that had been most enthralling. The intertwined elements of the arts, the local community and opaque and myriad magical practices filled my days. Whilst I became more accomplished and the art forms that I learned became increasingly more complex, the Western bias (for perfection) that I brought to my studies in
Indonesia never truly subsided nor did my craving for ‘existential authenticity’ (Cohen, E. 1979). While my accomplishments immersed me in the cultural practices associated with them, it became painfully obvious that, for most Indonesians, I could never hope to obviate the relevance to them of my ethnicity.

My unrequited desire for authenticity forms one of the ‘texts’ of my life in Java. The recital that I presented in 2012 was a first attempt to investigate these ‘texts’. Indeed, the academic process of creating performance recitals based on my embodied practice ignited processes of ‘productive distanciation’ (Rice 1994: 6) that were ‘necessary to explanation and critical interpretation of one's own culture’ (Harnish 2001: 34). For example, the recitals reflected how each stage of mastery represents a ‘new understanding of the world’ and of myself (after Harnish 2001: 36). In order to unpack these processes of self-discovery, the next chapter will focus on the first performance recital, *In the Demon’s Circle: Love, Lyrics and Lotus Flowers*, as it was prepared and performed in 2012.
Chapter 3:

Yellow – Recital 1 – *In the Demon’s Circle: Love, Lyrics and Lotus Flowers* 41

I initially left Java, Indonesia, to study for a diploma of Arts Management at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) in Perth, Western Australia. I had the (now) clearly unrealistic intention to leave behind my ‘glass ceiling’ performance life and my identity as a Javanese performing artist. The decision to leave Java was extremely difficult to make. The intense satisfaction I find from Javanese performance was matched only by my deep connection to an extensive community of musicians, dancers, cousins, daughters, stepdaughters and aunts. Indeed, life in Java was replete with opportunities to perform. Moreover, it was economically feasible to enjoy extensive rehearsals with expert musicians and host musical evenings or extended workshops with guest instructors from all over Indonesia. In leaving Java and the community I had for so long called ‘home’, I feared that I would never replicate such a full performance calendar. I was also concerned about what I saw as a necessary lowering of my professional standards in order to be able to perform outside of Java.

My decision to stop performing did not last when I was almost immediately drawn to multicultural performance opportunities. In 2010, and as part of my arts management activities, I undertook an internship at KULCHA Multicultural Arts Centre 42 in Fremantle, a city just south of Perth known for its beaches and bohemian artist community. Upon commencing the internship I discovered a timely coincidence with the twentieth anniversary of the sister-state initiative that had existed for a number of years between the governments of Western Australia and

41 Please refer to Appendix B for annotated programme notes and a full description of the recital. A DVD recording of the recital is also provided at the back of the portfolio.

42 Established in 1983, KULCHA Multicultural Arts Centre is ‘dedicated to developing, promoting and presenting culturally diverse artists throughout the state.’
East Java, Indonesia. The opportunity to celebrate the economic, financial and artistic trade relationship between the sister-states also capitalised on my expertise in the Javanese performing arts. The project, sponsored by KULCHA, aimed to remount one of the performance outcomes of exchanges that took place in 1995, namely the production ‘One Sky’ or *Satu Langit*.43

Students from The University of Western Australia (UWA) School of Music, led by Assistant Professor Jonathan McIntosh, joined musicians at weekly gamelan rehearsals at the Perth Indonesian Consulate in preparation for the event. In addition to working as project manager for the show, I also performed as pesindhen and dancer. Despite the ‘multicultural’ nature of the venture, I was dissatisfied with my ‘tokenistic’ participation. The inclusion of dances by renowned Indonesian artist Didik Nini Thowok, while worthy, also felt disconnected from the rest of the show. Seemingly adding such dances only for exotic spice, the intercultural performance did not emphasise the integrative, or alternatively, the disjunctive (after Schechner 2002: 226), nor was it a creative reinterpretation of heterogeneous cultural material (Pavis 1996: 2).

Despite my misgivings, the opportunity to perform Javanese dance on a Western stage reignited the dampened flame of my love of performance, and particularly of Javanese song and dance. The original catalyst for my DMA project upon entering the UWA School of Music was based on my desire to reflect and hopefully rectify the dissatisfaction that I felt with the *Satu Langit* performance. I wished to produce work that better reflected the embodied practice of artists such as myself. I also hoped to interrogate the difficulty inherent in presenting truly

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43 The Western Australian government sponsored an exchange program between artists in Surabaya, East Java and Perth-based choreographer Chrissie Parrott that resulted in the One Sky (*Satu Langit*) production that was subsequently performed in Perth and Surabaya.
intercultural work\textsuperscript{44} by considering the processes involved in becoming a multicultural/intercultural artist. Ironically, the work I have since undertaken has forced me to question that very identity and my troubled sense of ‘authenticity’. Indeed, I have been compelled to relinquish the naïve belief that I could reclaim my artistic self by transmogrifying from recognised Javanese performing artist in Java to multicultural artist in Perth. The first challenges to my sense of identity came during preparations for the first DMA recital, \textit{In The Demon’s Circle: Love, Lyrics and Lotus Flowers}, presented on 27 April 2012 in the Callaway Music Auditorium at The University of Western Australia (UWA).

\textbf{Preparing the Recital}

Developed as a retrospective that chronicled my performing arts career trajectory in Java, the first recital presented music and dance works relevant to my evolution as a nationally recognised, skilled and accomplished Javanese singer-dancer performer. The presentation of such a catalogue was intended to performatively concretise my successful rise to nationally recognised, accomplished/skilled performer. The formative dance training that I brought to the recital included many genres and different regional styles.\textsuperscript{45} Whilst I had long been called upon most often to perform the introductory dance \textit{ngremo}, frequently before shadow puppet performance evenings, throughout my career in Java I had continued to perform other dances, such as the female-style \textit{tandhak tayub} cognates, such as Malang’s \textit{Beskalan} and \textit{Lengger} from the west Java region of Banyumas.

\textsuperscript{44} The work addresses the difficulty of presenting intercultural performance that creatively reinterprets heterogeneous cultural material (Pavis 1996: 2).

\textsuperscript{45} I have studied classical dances from Central Java such as \textit{Golek} and \textit{Gambyong}, female \textit{tandhak tayub} genres that involve singing as part of the dance performance from Banyuwangi (\textit{Gandrung}), Banyumas (\textit{Lengger}) and Malang (\textit{Beskalan}) as well as male-style \textit{Beskalan Lanang} and \textit{ngremo} in which the performer also sings. I also studied masked dances from Malang (\textit{Bapang}, \textit{Gunungsari} and \textit{Klono}) and Madura (\textit{Tameng}) as well as regional dances such as \textit{Srimpi Limo} from Malang and \textit{kreasi baru} and popular dance styles such as \textit{Jaipong} from Sunda.
In the first recital, a recording of which is provided in DVD format at the back of this portfolio, I chose to present dances that demonstrated my abilities across a range of performance styles and to introduce elements of this largely unknown repertoire to audiences outside of the Javanese context. ‘Authentically’ enacted, the dances I chose to perform presented a full range of performance styles: Bapang, in the strong male (kasar) style, androgynous ngremo performed by a woman in a semi-male style, and Lengger in a refined female (alus) style. The dances that I chose to perform in the recital were also intended to represent my artistic development chronologically: specifically, the first dance I learned, masked Bapang, led to ngremo which, in turn, led to my involvement in traditional singing (in order to perform the dance ‘correctly’) which then caused me to become a tandhak tayub and pesindhen. The latter development subsequently ignited my interest in singer-dancer dance forms as a genre, and this led, finally, to my learning other forms of tayub such as Gandrung Banyuwangi and Lengger Banyumas.

The running order/structure also mirrored my learning processes as they grew from rural to urban settings, local to national contexts, unrefined to refined performance styles and rudimentary to more complicated repertoire. In devising the recital, therefore, I structured it in a way that I felt was most appropriate to its subject matter. I chose this performance repertoire based on other factors as well: relevance to my development as an artist; songs and dances that were endurably popular (which meant that I had performed them often); personal favourites that I enjoyed performing; and, by referring to the training in mysticism that I had received. For example, I followed Pak Supat’s practice of singing invocational macapat stanzas at the start of the performance to acknowledge and mollify resident spirits. Macapat, based on classical verse forms and deriving from the epic story (layang) tradition
forms an important part of the Javanese song (sindhenan) repertoire, which I wished to present in performance.

Finally, I made practical calculations to ensure a balance between ‘active’ dance pieces and moments in the recital when I would be singing gendhing and when, therefore, the music might be perceived as more ‘static’ and less accessible to Perth audiences. I constructed the recital in this way in order to communicate with and entertain Perth audiences just as my skills as a performer had always entertained and ‘won over’ audiences in Java. For example, whilst recording the television show ‘Elizabeth Sings’, I had interspersed ‘heavy’ esoteric classical gamelan orchestral pieces with popular, ‘light’ music compositions. Similarly, my experiences of structuring tourist performances for guests at PSMD offered insight into the importance of balancing gendhing with visually accessible dance pieces.

The focus of the recital as a ‘performance as ritual’ reflected the ways in which my performance evolution had led inextricably to my departure from Java. I believed that a traditional approach to the structure of the recital would present the subject matter in the very best possible light. To this end, I purposefully constructed the recital in a very ‘Javanese’ way by adhering to the strictures of the cyclical musical modal (pathet) cycle inherent in any performance of traditional music (karawitan) or dance drama and by performing in Javanese. In addition, I adopted a very ‘correct’ approach when I performed the song and dance materials.

Despite my initial confidence about my repertoire choices, once I decided on the actual performance material, I then faced the hurdle of developing professional-quality gamelan musical accompaniment. My initial feeling was that it undermined my professionalism to perform to pre-recorded music. I knew from preparations for Satu Langit, however, that Perth lacked a professional gamelan ‘scene’. Moreover, the Malang-style gendhing and dances that I wished to perform for the recital are
notoriously difficult to play; even accomplished musicians trained in regional styles other than the East Javanese are known to struggle with East Java’s unique drumming and fast, interlocking mallet techniques. Because I did not feel that I had the resources to teach gamelan in Perth, I decided that only by returning to East Java could I develop the high quality musical accompaniment appropriate to my recital material.

The decision to develop extensive pre-recorded video backing tracks was my first concession to performing as a multicultural artist in Perth. Dance performances to pre-recorded (cassette) music had always been contrary to the ‘aesthetic concept of perkembangan “flowering” which sees art as a living form, ever-changing’ (Herbst 1997: 95) under which I had always performed. Undeniably, it obviates the potential for improvisation and spontaneity. Before modernisasi, moreover, and the advent of electronics and advanced sound systems, events in Java were always, and by necessity, performed ‘live’. Now, however, performing to cassette recordings has become an accepted and economical practice, particularly in performances that involve children and beginners. While there would therefore be no possibility for real spontaneity, by performing to pre-recorded music, my performances would reflect ‘the particular context at hand’ (Herbst 1997: 95).46

By enlisting the help of the musicians with whom I had long performed at the PSMD in Tumpang, I was able to tailor the final recital based on on-going feedback and perform to the recordings karaoke-style. An additional benefit of these in situ audio/visual-backing tracks was that they provided the audience with an otherwise impossible sense of ‘live’ (albeit virtual) musical performance taking place in Java. Revisiting my old community meant, however, facing many of the reasons that I had

46 In Java, I was accustomed to altering elements of my performances by ‘reading’ my audiences and the other performers on stage. For example, I had on many occasions lengthened or shortened particular sections of a song or dance based on the particular ‘context at hand’ or by communicating with the other performers.
chosen to leave in the first place. In particular, I had to factor in the realities of my long-fought struggles on a professional level with what my Western discipline and determination to succeed had perceived as the musicians’ disturbing unprofessionalism: when it rained, they slept and as a result there was no rehearsal. I knew that it was essential to be realistic about what I could accomplish in my recordings. Not fully recovered from my unhappiness and frustration, it was with ambivalence and trepidation that I proposed a week of rehearsals and recordings in Tumpang during December of 2011.

**Recording Recital Materials in Java**

Arriving at the Malang airport with my two daughters after having lived for two years in Perth jarred with my memories of halcyon days gone by. I had often arrived home to this small military airport after performances as a guest artist in Jakarta, Solo, Palembang, Lampung or Sulawesi. In those days, my waiting driver filled me in on all the gossip and home dramas whilst he hefted my bags into the back of the Kijang station wagon and as we filed past the exit booth and the guard who collected our parking stub.

On this occasion, however, my daughters and I pushed with the other passengers to retrieve our bags from the luggage carousel before joining the long line of travellers waiting for taxis outside the terminal building. Emerging onto the main road that was also the only thoroughfare from the airport to the city, the slow traffic of oversized trucks, ox-drawn carts hauling bricks and even a small community parade, held us up for more than an hour. I marvelled at the extreme pollution of the roads, the bikes, the trucks and the noise; at the crowds and the men who spat onto the street; and, at the listless women who sat on the low concrete veranda walls that divided their small properties from their neighbours. Whilst I felt alienated in Perth,
Malang’s constant onslaught of dust and grime gave me laryngitis after only a few days. I felt deeply unsettled. I began to wonder how this could ever have been ‘home’. Nonetheless, I had returned to Java with very specific academic goals: to produce audio/video recordings that would provide the backing tracks for my first DMA recital.

The rehearsal and recording process that I instigated in December 2011 was informed by twenty years of language, expectation, authority, ability and most importantly, inscribed history with the former members of the Mangun Dharma Art Centre (Padepokan Seni Mangun Dharma or PSMD) professional musicians group. For the upcoming recital, I had selected music that I knew was familiar to them and that could, therefore, be competently recorded within one week. It took two days, however, just to organise the actual rehearsals and set up the instruments (stored in the house of my former driver, Pak Udin). Nothing was definitely confirmed until the lead drummer, Pak Kusnadi, and I finished negotiations about suitable payment for the musicians. Then together we visited each musician’s home in turn in order to officially invite them to participate in the recording sessions.

Thankfully, in my experience with such things in Java, my schedule accommodated for such negotiations and the time it takes to talk to people, to make group decisions, and then to implement them. Finally, several days after arriving in Malang, the instruments were shoehorned into Pak Udin’s small, carpet-covered front room. The musician’s mallets pounded out the unique Malang-style syncopated rhythms and the gong resonated throughout the tiny space. The soul-filling, breath-taking, ineluctable joy that resurfaced in me recalled to mind the reasons why I had once been so determined and belligerent about staying in Java. I had worked with

47 Pak Kusnadi was the drummer who most often accompanied my performances. He was well respected for his facility at creating accompaniment for ‘new creation’ (kreasi baru) dance choreography.

48 I paid each musician Rp.10,000 per rehearsal (approximately AU$10) plus their performance fee for the recordings.
many of these musicians since I first started performing *Bapang* in 1990 and they had been my constant companions throughout my career in Java. For five days each morning we spread the instruments out in *Pak* Udin’s front room (they were pushed against the wall at night) and diligently rehearsed the material to make it as flawless as possible in preparation for the two days that were scheduled for the final recordings.

The most problematic aspect of creating the karaoke-style backing tracks was how to record music without the actual vocal line when it is normally the singer’s voice that cues musical pauses and tempo changes. In particular, ‘speeding up’ (*ngampat*) from slow to fast, such as during singing sections in *ngremo*, was particularly troublesome. When rehearsing many of the other pieces, however, the musicians were responsive to shifts in the tempo (*irama*) without stumbling over the lack of the usual vocal cues. The troubles we faced while preparing the recordings of *ngremo* clearly underlined both the integral nature of the singer’s vocal line and the importance of ‘buying and selling’ (*dodol tinuku*) between musicians and singers or dancers. The musicians disagreed about where the drum should cue tempo changes within the colotomic structure of the music. Their understandings of the music were incompatible with vocal music performed without benefit of a vocalist.

We faced similar difficulties with verses of Central Javanese style *macapat* and other lyrics typically accompanied exclusively by *gender*, many of which I had included in the recital outline. For example, introductory stanzas are used for many ‘songs’ (*langgam*) such as ‘Broken Hearted’ (*Dadi Ati*), vocal pauses (*andhegan*) within pieces such as *Ladrang Pangkur* and *Ayak 9 Tikel* and as short vocal introductions (*buko celuk*) to compositions, such as *Jineman Uler Kambang*. The duet-like ‘interjections’ (*senggakan*) that the musicians sing in between vocal

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49 A *gender* is a type of metallophone that consists of 10 to 14 tuned metal bars suspended over a tuned resonator of bamboo or metal that are struck with two hand-held padded wooden discs.
sections of *Lengger Banyumas* were equally difficult to record without benefit of the female vocalist’s half of the duet. Finally, we concurred that I would silently mouth the vocal phrases and gave visual cues to mitigate the challenges of making these kinds of recordings. Having put so much effort into the recordings, the musicians and I were in accord in wanting to create the atmosphere of a live performance.

To that end, we hired a raised wooden platform stage (*genjot*) on which the gamelan ensemble was displayed. A festive roof made by hanging colourful tarps from a square metal frame (*tarob*) hugged this makeshift stage to keep out the rain and the sun’s glare. The musicians matching uniforms of colourful jackets and pre-tied batik scarf hats provided them with appropriately formal attire.

The morning of the recording began by ritually ‘feeding’\(^{50}\) the largest gong (*gong ageng*), believed to contain the soul of the gamelan ensemble (see figure 12). After Pak Supat intoned some ritual stanzas, we feasted on the ceremonial rice dishes. Then we finally commenced the recording sessions. Due to the public nature of the filming – we had set up the *genjot* in Pak Udin’s front yard – despite our extensive rehearsals, the eruptions of chicken fights and revving motorcycles were disruptive and meant that we were forced into many retakes. Ultimately, however, whilst editing the final video material for the first recital, I came to appreciate the atmospheric sounds of neighbours talking, children crying and roosters crowing. These ‘extra’ sounds added side-of-the-road ambience that I believed gave a real sense of rural Javanese life. Upon my return from making the recordings, and as I began to prepare for the performance, I was confident of the overall logic of the recital’s structure. I felt that the audio-visual backing tracks would provide visceral access to my old Javanese sphere of practice, and that presenting this compendium of songs and dances would effectively introduce my audiences to the magic of the

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\(^{50}\) Incense and offerings are traditionally used to ‘feed’ pusaka (heirlooms such as sacred knives (*keris*), masks and gamelan ensembles), ritually purifying them against evil spirits.
Javanese performing arts. Back in Perth, therefore, I began to organise the materials for my first version of the show, the mini-recital performance.

Figure 12. Burning incense in a brazier (prapen) prior to a performance. Photograph by Ruedi Nuetzi and used with permission.

**The Mini-Recital Performance**

Presented approximately four weeks prior to the formal assessment, the 20-minute mini-recital showcased the first half of the proposed recital material. I provided my supervisors with a brief ‘storyboard’ that offered minimal explanations of each section of the recital in lieu of programme notes. During my presentation, I wore minimal costume and no make-up, but tried to convey how the necessary costume changes would be incorporated into the overall structure of the event. For example, I planned to layer the characteristic *Bapang* costume – two beaded velvet ‘aprons’ that are tied to cover the front and back of beaded velvet short pants (see figure 13) – over the male-style *ngremo* costume to allow for a quick on-stage costume change. I also planned to remain on stage whilst I removed these layers and added the black moustache, black wig and cloth headdress that are provide the unique costume of *ngremo* performances. Undertaking such costume changes on stage whilst performing songs that introduced the next dance piece would, I believed, keep the
recital flowing. I planned to use the 20-minute interval at the performance of the actual recital to change into the traditional female-style costume (long sleeved blouse [kebayak] and floor length batik skirt) that I would wear throughout Act II.

Figure 13. The author performing *Bapang* in 1991. Photograph by David Schrieber and used with permission.

I was concerned, however, by the feedback that I received after the mini-recital. While my supervisors confirmed that I had performed the material masterfully, emotionally they felt unable to relate to the content of the performance. Clearly, presenting ‘pure’ cultural content (that is, traditional Javanese songs and dances) without any narration or ‘translation’, such as programme notes or explanations, was insufficient for the purposes of such an academic recital. I had not sufficiently considered my new, Western performance context. I realised, therefore, that presenting this material as an examination-type performance of cabaret-style
discrete pieces did not positively reflect the material or my artistic purpose: that is, to provide a contextualised and accessible performance.

My experiences with Javanese performance prior to this had been primarily at indigenous community events where no explanation or translation was required. Successful performance careers were, in fact, predicated on competently reproducing various songs and dances learned from teachers, video CDs or cassettes. In these contexts, the audience brings with them a significant level of expectation and cultural understanding. Unwittingly aping such traditional ways of performing produced the equivalent of a superficial tourist cabaret. I could not imagine performing the songs or dances without the appropriate costumes or accompaniment (and we had recorded them in Java with appropriate stage and staging), yet the mini-recital had succeeded only in recreating the external trappings of a Javanese performance ambience. Because this was not what I had intended to convey, I was confronted with making non-traditional choices about how to proceed with presenting the recital material. With this in mind, I reconsidered the elements that had guided my initial preparations. In devising the recital I had wished to accomplish a number of things: performatively investigate my artistic development in Java; confirm my position as an accomplished performer/skilled exponent of the Javanese performing arts within the academic sphere; perform Javanese song and dance without alienating my audience; and, finally, develop a sympathetic and informed ‘fan-base’ through my skills as a performer/multicultural artist living and working in Perth. I believed that the mini-recital had succeeded on only two counts.

Whilst it had successfully chronicled my artistic development and had done so within a Javanese context, the mini-recital had been alienating and failed to cultivate my supervisors as a future audience. The un-contextualised nature of the material gave no support to my audience. As a consequence, my supervisors were forced to
evaluate my performance based on their own educations, backgrounds and Western aesthetic skills, knowledge and social identities (after Gerstin 1998: 397). As a result of my long-term exposure to Javanese performance, I had inadvertently presented the mini-recital material in a way that only I, an insider, would understand. What I had presented was shaped by my experiences (after Stoller 1989: 38-39). Solely responsible ‘for organising knowledge’ (Blacking 1987: 117, cited in McIntosh 2005: 24), I found translating, or ‘mediating’ (McIntosh 2005; Naughton 1996) the cultural artefacts upon which the recital was based particularly challenging. Indeed, I did not fully anticipate the difficulties of articulating my embodied knowledge (of the Javanese performing arts) outside of the Javanese socio-cultural context. Unpacking this material and its associations with deeply held mystical beliefs and cultural practices meant developing new performance skills in order to communicate to a new audience within the Western Australian context. Accordingly, I needed to adopt the ‘jeweller’s eye view as opposed to the bird’s-eye view’ (Stone 2008: 171) in order to deconstruct the performance material enough to make it accessible. Focusing on my personal experiences of these texts was one such way to bring them into the present.

**Brief Description of In the Demon’s Circle**

The recital, *In the Demon’s Circle*, was performed in the School of Music’s Callaway Music Auditorium at The University of Western Australia. To overcome the limitations of this Western art music recital venue, I supplemented the venue with small loud speakers and a microphone that amplified my voice as well as the audio-visual backing tracks to which I performed ‘karaoke-style’. The video clips were projected on a large screen at the back of the performance space (see figure 14). The performance commenced with overture music in the *pelog sepuluh* mode as
performed by the musicians that I recorded in December 2011 in Tumpang, Malang, East Java. Superimposed over this music, a pre-recorded voice-over described my first experience with the traditional arts of Malang. Following this introduction, and now seated on stage in front of the microphone stand and a makeshift brazier, I sang three *macapat* stanzas in Javanese whilst burning incense smoke to ‘feed’ the *Bapang* mask that I would wear in the next dance item.

Figure 14. Author performing *Bapang* in dress rehearsal for Recital 1 with audio-visual backing track accompaniment projected onto a cloth screen. Photo by Condro Lukitosari and used with permission.

A shortened version of *Bapang* followed; like the rest of the recital, it was performed to pre-recorded backing tracks. Exiting the stage at the end of the dance, a video clip showed a past performance of me dancing *ngremo in situ* at a *tayub* event. Whilst I changed into the *ngremo* costume, another voice-over described my experiences performing *ngremo tembel*. Once more on stage I then sang a short song
called Jineman Uler Kambang to give an idea of the various types of songs that I had learned and sung during performances of ngremo tembel and tayub. The dance presentation of the ngremo tembel included a short ‘welcome to the show’ singing section that I performed in Javanese. Then, and to give the sense of a tayub environment, my daughter, Condro Lukitosari, and supervisor, Assistant Professor Jonathan McIntosh, danced with me in the penultimate section of the dance. An interval followed. During this time, and whilst the pre-recorded audio/video showed the Tumpang musicians playing Malang-style interlude music, I changed into the female-style costume of long wrapped batik skirt, tight-fitting lace kebayak blouse, high teased hair and large artificial bun (see figure 15).

Figure 15. The author performing Lengger Banyumas in Recital 1. Photograph by Ibu Hermin and used with permission.

Following the interval and another informational voice-over, I performed Lengger, a regional variant of tayub from the Banyumas region of central West Java.
The love song, ‘Broken Hearted’ (Dadi Ati) followed. I performed this song in the popular campursari style, in which the singer does not sit, but stands in order to dance and sway to the music whilst she sings. The refined compositions, Ladrang Pangkur and Ayak 9, completed the evening and provided a brief taste of the classical Central Javanese repertoire.

Reflections on In the Demon’s Circle that Influenced the Second Recital

Instead of offering musical compositions by various composers (the ‘text’ of the Western music student’s recital), the retrospective nature of my recital drew from the music and dance that I understood ‘from the “inside”’ (Baily 2008: 121). Thanks to my life and work in Java, my lived experience became the study object and I became the ‘text’ of the recital’s performative focus. ‘[C]omprehending cultural aesthetics, social structures, and interactions’ (Hahn 2007: 59) through total immersion and ‘inhabiting’ (after Jackson 1983: 340) the Javanese traditional performance world, I presented my embodiment of the recital’s dances and songs. One problematic example of my embodiment is that I chose to sing my lyrics in Javanese. This made sense to me at the time (even though none of my audience could understand the lyrics) because I knew that the words of the songs and poetic couplets provided no narrative content and were, therefore, irrelevant to my performance.

In Java, the literary content of any particular verse does not affect the successful performance of traditional songs and dances. Therefore, when singing classical gendhing, pesindhen may (with a few exceptions) select any poetic couplet at random from amongst a large repertoire of previously composed and memorised poetic stanzas. Most Central Javanese gendhing are sung using the poeticwangsalan structure, a rhyming couplet (AB) of twelve lines each with a 4 + 8 internal
structure. Alternatively, East Javanese compositions are sung using *parikan*, a four-line set of two rhyming couplets (ABAB), each between 8-10 syllables per line. Javanese audiences know and accept this practice – indeed, as an example of Javanese audiences’ willingness not to understand the language produced in performance, many sit contentedly for hours at shadow puppet performances although they do not understand the language of the *dhalang* because it is archaic *Kawi* or Old Javanese.

Unlike performances within indigenous contexts where the performer may take for granted the audience’s ‘sufficient reference points’ (Herbst 1997: 146), this cultural understanding was not conveyed to my supervisors during the mini-recital. The understandings that I gained from this experience, and my subsequent performances in the first recital, academic lectures and demonstrations, made me realise the advantages of composing and singing context-appropriate, and therefore English-language, texts. Although ‘multicultural events’ often include many elements that may be ‘inaccessible or mysterious’ (Berger 2009: xii), my audience resisted this; in accommodating them, I still wished to avoid outright explanations that felt antithetical to ‘making art’. Incorporating language by writing texts in English would, I believed, address some of this uncertainty.

In order to begin this process of translation, however, I had to overcome my own historical bias of trying to perform as correctly as possible. I recognised that even the mini-recital’s structure was due to this penchant for reifying the cultural ‘text’, even to the point of creating a ‘spectacle of the other’ (Stuart Hall 1997, cited in Cohen, M. 2010: 5) or the exotic. In making changes, I chose to celebrate the ‘hyphenated’ life of someone living as part of the Javanese diaspora – that is, ‘living in one nation-state, but identifying and participating in the culture of another’

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51 For further discussion of wangsalan, see Sutton (1984, 1989).
(Johnson, H. 2007: 88). Whilst I eschewed the kind of ‘ethnically’ pure multicultural arts performances by artists who are chronically marginalised, I also scorned multicultural productions, such as Satu Langit because, the latter, I felt, only superficially appropriated traditional performance art while commoditising its essence in search of accessibility and marketability. It had been naïve, however, to present my ‘hyphenated’ life without attempting to facilitate a deeper understanding, to ‘mediate’ the material (after McIntosh 2005) or to sincerely cultivate audience interest. In presenting ‘objectly authentic’ (after Steiner and Reisinger 2006) work, I merely reified the ‘costume, choreography, music and storyline of the exotic, the historical, and the traditional’ (Dunbar-Hall 2001: 174), and, in offering up the (un-translated) artefacts of my life in Java, the demon’s circle further ensnared me. The very nature of this cultural trap, however, suggested ‘the possibility of new self-understandings and of new ways of being-in-the-world’ (Rice 1995: 267).

Like Turner’s (1967: 15) initiate who experiences ‘life-crisis’ rituals and transformational events that are ‘performed to placate or exorcise preternatural beings’ (Turner 1972: 1100), the recital provided me with a forum in which to exorcise my ‘demons’ on stage as part of an auto-ethnographic ritual as performance event.52 The recital illuminated the undeniably troubled relationship that I had with my ‘voice, the ensemble, and the piece’ (Berger 2009: 119). Unconsciously, when I had been brought into the ‘spiritual centre’ (Cohen, E. 1979) of my adoptive community, I had also accepted all the rules about how the traditional arts could be performed. The very efforts of PSMD to ‘preserve and promote’ traditional cultures presupposed the existence, for example, of a ‘real Beskalan’ (Beskalan sing asli) (Sunardi 2007: 10) or a ‘real’ Bapang. Making changes to the first recital, therefore,

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52 Thanks to Jonathan McIntosh for suggesting this.
provided an outlet to explore my various new roles as playwright, composer and performance artist.

In order to address these aspects, I decided to adhere less to my old ways of performing that were based on the traditional. For example, whilst retaining the cyclical colotomic structures appropriate to Javanese performances, I also began to incorporate Western linear narrative, programme notes and audio-visual materials. These additions theatricalised the recital in order to circumvent the need for ‘spoken words to describe visual knowledge’ (Pink 2001: 50). These additions also allowed the audience to ‘grasp’ what had hitherto been ‘outside the scope of their experience’ (Stoller 1989: 57). Bringing this material ‘into lived experience’ (Berger 2009: xii), moreover, invited the audience to engage the performance texts ‘with their senses’ (Berger 2009: x). The inclusion of pre-recorded auto-ethnographic monologues and in situ audio-visual performance texts thus transcended the ‘authentic’ approach as I had presented it in the mini-recital. For instance, the initial pre-recorded voice-over monologue that was superimposed over the pre-recorded overture (sepuluh) music, introduced the city of Malang, me as the artist-object and my first experiences of mask dance. Similarly emphasising the ‘experiential and individual nature of social life’ (Pink 2001: 139), the second pre-recorded narrative described the world of tayub and was dubbed over video recordings of me performing the initial ngremo tembel portion of a tayub evening. I wished to humanise the ‘constructed representations’ (Pink 2001: 143) of my subjective experiences. In addition to these ‘narrative bytes’, I also incorporated some techniques from notable intercultural and multicultural artists.

Intercultural artists such as Indian dancer Uday Shankar (Erdman 1987) provide useful alternative approaches to presenting traditional cultural forms out of context. Shankar’s use of Western narrative and performance practice to ‘translate’
traditional Indian theatre inspired me to creatively incorporate Western objectivity into the recital. For example, I chose to shift the focus from the texts themselves (that is, the songs and dances) and onto myself as the performer of the texts (after Johnson, H. 2007: 75). In so doing, I displaced the uncritical practitioner of Javanese cultural artefacts who had treated the material as ‘correctly’ as possible. I had been afraid that the process of ‘explaining’ what I was doing on stage would ultimately distance me from the deconstructed art forms that I loved. It did, but this was a necessary part of tailoring Javanese material specifically to the context of my current Perth audience.

While I had initially created the performance content of the mini-recital based on my historical understandings of the material, the quest for and provision of narrative content (that is, what I included in the programme notes, the video footage of the musicians performing, the voice-overs for the video, and the video footage of me dancing at various past events in Java), transformed me from ‘static’ performer to ‘producer of expressive culture’ (Berger 2009: 12). No longer just a performance vessel, the formerly uncritical, mini-recital ‘me’ morphed into ‘something different than I was when I began the inquiry’ (Rice 1995: 272). Consequently, the recital dances and songs became the ‘agents’ in my ‘ongoing artistic development’ (Dunbar-Hall 2001: 174) my performance celebrated my subjective instinctive understanding of them as an insider Javanese singer/dancer. Having left Java behind and accepting the need to deconstruct the work for Western audiences, I slowly began to realise that I was no longer driven by the purist ‘ethnologically authentic’ (Cohen, M. 2010) agenda that had made In the Demon’s Circle a valorisation of a frozen Javanese life.

The recital, In the Demon’s Circle, documented a transformative rite of passage. Just as upon first arriving in Java I experienced a number of ritual
transformations from novice performer to accomplished professional so, too, in Perth. I experienced similar such metamorphoses. The ways in which I absorbed dance in Tumpang had implied an object authenticity inherent to the traditional arts of Java. That is, only by donning the right costume, makeup and by performing appropriate movements with the correct performance attitude could a traditional dance be successful. I had been as much a cultural novice as I was a beginner dancer when I first arrived in Indonesia. Sponge-like, whilst I was focussed on learning the correct way to perform my dance moves, I was also being enculturated in how to be ‘Javanese’.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the preparation and presentation of the first recital, *In the Demon’s Circle*. It has also included the post-performance reflections that influenced my preparations for the second recital. I initially conceived of *In the Demon’s Circle* as a retrospective, and therefore chose pieces of dance and music that I thought appropriately reflective of my performing arts career in Java. Once I had chosen and put the material in order, I travelled to Malang in East Java, Indonesia where the musicians and I made several audio-visual recordings of each performance item to ensure that the recordings flowed smoothly from one to the next.

One month prior to the recital proper, I presented the first half of the presentation to my three supervisors. At the time that I presented the mini-recital, I believed it my duty to produce a retrospective recital that offered as ‘true’ a representation of my adoptive cultural heritage as possible. Responses to the mini-recital had been confronting, however, and this forced me to change my approach. When I added *in situ* field recordings and poetic narratives in English, the recital
transformed the songs and dances into performative artefacts of my former life rather than unassailable items of Javanese cultural heritage. By providing self-reflective explorations of the recital material, the liminal ‘performance as ritual’ began a critical process of distanciation (after Rice 1994).

Thanks to their critical feedback, it became apparent that presenting the material ‘authentically’ prevented me from truly connecting with my audience. Bringing these cultural artefacts more fully into my lived experience provided mediation between the audience and the foreign material. To accomplish this, I provided introductions to the Javanese arts and my life in Java by incorporating pre-recorded voiceovers with ethnographic and biographical content before each section of the recital. I did not, however, consider this particular type of cultural bridging to be the most effective nor did it entirely suit my purposes. Nonetheless, this was a good first step to creating a work of theatre rather than a work of ethnography or multicultural performance cabaret. Having described the first recital and the new pre-understandings that emerged from the performance process, the next chapter similarly considers the preparation, presentation, successes and failures of the second recital.
Chapter 4:

Red – Preparing the Recital *Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle*53

The previous chapter has provided a discussion of preparing, producing and performing the first recital, *In the Demon’s Circle*. In response to questions about identity that emerged as a result of this process, the second recital, *Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle*, took a new approach to the traditions of my embodied practice. Because of the second recital’s Javanese story and subject, as well as my continuing fascination with and desire to experiment within this performance tradition, I chose to ground the work in a Javanese performance practice. At the same time, the issues about identity that had emerged from the first recital had brought to light my struggles with contextualising Javanese cultural materials. While still planning to use this material in the second recital, I no longer wished to present my performances in traditional ways. As a consequence, I prepared the recital manuscript with the ambition of creatively reconstructing and reformulating the traditional material. Ostensibly charting one Javanese woman’s artistic progression from novice to professional performer to magically powerful shaman, my 2006 unpublished manuscript offered many possible avenues for reinvigorating my performance repertoire.

For this reason, I spent the first few months of preparations for the second recital developing an overall storyline based on the manuscript. Javanist religious beliefs figured prominently in the original document. Therefore, I also spent time researching the Javanese myth and mysticism through which I hoped to tell the story of Srimaya. The lead protagonist in the manuscript, Srimaya’s character is loosely based on the Malang historical figure, Muskayah. I also wished to tell the story

53 Please refer to Appendix C for fully annotated programme notes and a description of the recital. A DVD recording of the recital is also provided at the back of the portfolio.
through the vehicle of *macapat*, a style that remains closely associated with Javanese mystical symbolism. Therefore I analysed numerous Javanese sung poetic verse and oral theatre (*macapat*) stories (*layang*) that I had collected from Pak Supat. These helped to structure the recital. Due to personal events in my own life at the time (the dislocation I felt due to a number of losses), I found relief in the fatalism of Javanese mystical cosmology. Unlike what I perceive as the Western reluctance to face the inescapability of death, the five mystical stages of Javanese mysticism are said, on the contrary, to prepare its practitioner for death’s inevitability. Because of the universal nature of mysticism in Java, many traditional performance forms are influenced by its tenets. I wished to make the performance as universally accessible whilst also presenting Javanese song and dance in new and non-traditional ways, I therefore planned to compose texts within the framework of Javanese *macapat*, but cast them in English.

I chose to sing the lyrics performed during the various *gendhing* in Javanese, however. As a professional *pesindhen* and *tandhak tayub* I have memorised numerous Central Javanese *wangsalan* and East Javanese *parikan*. For the purposes of the recital, I also memorised all of the poetic verses that I composed. Because the lyrics during the dances and *gendhing* were not intended to convey narrative content, but rather re-produce aspects of Javanese mystical symbolism, I tried to reflect this in the performance. I chose to call upon my store of memorised Javanese texts rather than undertaking the labourious job of writing and memorising further poetic verses that were not essential to Srimaya’s story. I recognise that this ‘shortcut’ was confusing to the audience and I plan to reconsider this approach in the future. My logic, however erroneous, was that the cosmic symbolism of sacred dances such as *Srimpi Limo* (Five Srimpi), created by such historically powerful mystical characters as Muskayah, should be able to stand on their own.
According to local East Javanese sources (see Munardi 1996, Restian 2012, Sunardi 2007, Wibowo 1996), the historical figure, Muskayah, reportedly created the ritual cosmic space appropriate for sacred purification ceremonies by performing this dance. In the second recital I drew on this symbolism and staging this mystical cosmos was contingent on a number of factors. For example, it required a supporting cast of associate actor-dancers to create dramatic tension by physicalising the cosmic encounter between benevolent and malevolent characters. Fortunately, during the developmental phase, my teaching activities at Perth’s Mount Lawley Senior High School brought me into contact with nine Year 8 Specialist Visual and Performing Arts (SVAPA) students who welcomed the opportunity to perform with me in the production.54 Working with young untrained dancers and actors meant conceding certain aspects of my artistic vision. Incorporating these dancers and performing in the Mount Lawley Senior High School black box performance space, the Tricycle (rather than a classical music auditorium), however, exponentially increased the possibility of creating a fully staged production that effectively showcased my challenging and culturally unfamiliar material. My incorporation of video/audio clips, non-ethnically ‘correct’ dancers, Western theatre and original costumes helped to deconstruct the Javanese cosmic symbols and aimed to make them accessible to Western audiences.

The present chapter provides information concerning the stages of my preparations for the second recital: first writing the English-language texts and preparing the show’s overall structure, returning once again to Java to record audio-visual material and, finally, teaching the dances and dramatic content to the students who joined me as associate artists. The chapter also briefly describes the

54 I first began working with the students in July 2012 when I was contracted for one term to teach weekly early morning Javanese performing arts classes to Year 8 students enrolled in the Specialist Visual and Performing Arts (SVAPA) program at Mount Lawley Senior High School in Perth, Western Australia.
performances of *Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle* that were presented in February of 2013. Magical mysticism was always an integral element of the traditional arts of Java as I have learned them and was, therefore, also an important aspect of my own embodiment of it. The recital as a performance ‘text’ can thus be read on many different levels and as an exploration of the relationship between theatre and Javanese mystical symbolism. Because of the amount of cultural content that was included in the recital, I was also advised by my supervisors to develop and provide the audience with extensive programme notes. As a consequence, I tried to make some of the insider knowledge about the ‘magic’ that *Srimaya* presented on stage available to the audience via programme notes. I meant for the audience members to choose how far they wished to engage with the mystical world that was produced for them on stage. Before turning to a discussion of the recital, therefore, the chapter first briefly explores salient aspects of this mystical world by introducing traditional Javanese constructions of meaning and the ways in which mysticism has traditionally been concretised on stage.

**Javanese Constructions of Meaning**

Traditionally, the Javanese make no distinction between ‘art’, ‘ritual’ and the mystical powers associated with ritual (Foley 1984: 53; Lysloff 1993: 53). Indeed, rituals throughout Java are rich in cultural and spiritual content because ‘the world is alive with cosmic power which may reside in men, spirits of the dead, supernatural entities, or objects of the material world’ (Wessing 1978: 76-7). In shadow puppet performances, in fact, two distinct audiences are believed to be in attendance: the essential, though unseen, audience of ‘spirits, demons and creatures, gods, and ancestors’, and the ‘non-essential’ human audience (Becker, A. 1979: 231). Similarly, and contrary to most Western contexts, Javanese performers in ritual
events are often considered to be no more than vessels of the traditions they represent (Foley 1985: 43). Javanese attitudes towards individual performers reflect the latter’s ritual function within such traditional contexts. The success of any performance is judged by a performer’s ability, as a cultural vessel, to embody the inner feeling (rasa) that, based on Javanese mystical belief, allows for the free flow of energy and potency (Weiss 2003: 42). Ritual, theatre and musical practices in Java are therefore fecund with contextual meaning. For example, rasa – essential to spiritually potent performances – also mirrors the ‘absolute truth’ (rasa sejati), or mystical enlightenment, that is found through meditation (Walton 2007: 35, Weiss 2003: 42).

In Java, traditional mystical sayings, such as ‘four directions, five in the centre’ (keblat papat limo pancer) and ‘four siblings, five in the centre’ (dulur papat limo pancer), articulate and reflect commonly held, mystical symbolic beliefs. According to this saying, the ‘I’ of the self resides in the centre and surrounded by four compass points (also referred to as ‘winds’ [angin]) that are said to pivot, like the spokes on a wheel, around this centre. In practice, each of the five points, north, south, east, west and the centre, is further associated with a character or humour, specifically anger, misery, love, passion, and death/peace. Each of the five points is also associated with natural elements, such as water/blood, air/wind, earth/flesh, and fire. In East Java, the colour white is associated with the east, with beginnings, with water, and, in mysticism, with a focus on appearances; black is associated with the north, with worldly self-serving and physical desires, with wind and breath, and, in mysticism, with taking the first steps towards a fuller inner life; yellow is associated with the west, with love, pleasure, the earth and flesh, and in mysticism with beginning to confront the truth; red is associated with the south, with lust, passion and madness, with fire and mountains and, in mysticism, with gaining complete insight and eternal mastery over the self and worldly life; and, finally, blue-green or teal is associated
with the centre, with peace, eloquence, and, in mysticism, with death and perfection (see figure 16).

![Image of 'four directions, five in the centre'](image)

Figure 16. The ‘four directions, five in the centre’. Artwork by the author.

Additionally, each compass direction is said to parallel a stage in the human life cycle: life starts in the east with the rising of the sun and, passing through each corresponding stage of mystical development in turn, comes to rest finally at the centre in death. Extending this mystical paradigm further, every person is said to be born with and protected by four ‘siblings’. In this context, M. Soleh Adi Pramono (pers. comm., n.d.) often explained that the term ‘siblings’ denotes the products of birth: the amniotic fluid, the blood, the afterbirth and the umbilical cord. Various dances are also said to embody this mystical construct. For example, *Srimpi* dances associated with the palace traditions of Surakarta and Yogyakarta are considered especially spiritually powerful (Choy 1984, Hughes-Freeland, 1991, 1997, 2008b). Associated by name with such palace traditions, the East Javanese dance, *Srimpi*
Limo (Five Srimpi), and its predecessor, Beskalan, are considered by practitioners to have particular magic potency.

**Javanese Expressions of Performed Mysticism**

Found in Malang, East Java, the symbolic dances Srimpi Limo and Beskalan,⁵⁵ are spiritually powerful because they incorporate important elements of Javanese mysticism. Their performance landscapes include colour, compass direction, mood (watak) and the internalised pure concentration (ning) that, through scripted movements, manifests and represents the Javanese cosmos on stage. These dances are associated historically with purification ceremonies. Performed by shaman (dhalong dukun), these events are held to protect certain people from bad luck (Munardi 1996, Restian 2012, Sunardi 2007, Wibowo 1996). The reasons given for performing a ritual purification are myriad: for example, boys born between two sisters (or a girl between two boys) and babies born at dawn are said to be in danger. Even knocking over a rice pot whilst cooking may require a ritual (see Headley 2000). Purifications are also performed on behalf of entire communities. Whether for communities or for an individual, however, ritual purifications are performed to provide protection against a demon ogre. According to Javanese mythology, this demon, Bethoro Kolo, kills and eats the unprotected. Those who gain especial spiritual potency therefore must contain him.

To that end, Srimpi Limo and Beskalan were originally developed and disseminated in the 1940s and 1950s by Muskayah, an East Javanese singing and dancing tayub performer (tandhak tayub) and shaman (dukun) from the town of Ngadireso, located approximately 30 kilometers from the city of Malang in the sub district of Poncokosuma, Malang Regency.

⁵⁵ The dance is named after the gamelan composition that accompanies it, beskalan, which literally translates as ‘beginnings’.
Sacred Dances

Local legend has it that when Muskayah was nine years old and suffering from a fever, Proboretno, a legendary Mataram kingdom[^56] princess, ‘came to her, instructed her to become a dancer to heal people, and “gave” her the dance movement, songs, and musical accompaniment’ (Sunardi 2007: 57; Wibowo 1996: 44). The Javanese believe that illnesses such as Muskayah’s are part of ritual processes, often bringing spiritual gifts and boons (see also Wolbers 1993). When Muskayah woke, healed, from her fever, she immediately began to dance. An itinerant *tayub* drummer who happened to be passing by accompanied her performance with music called *Beskalan*, or ‘beginnings’ (Wibowo 1996: 45).[^57] Following local tradition, therefore, Muskayah began to perform as a singer-dancer *tandhak tayub* (Wibowo 1996: 45) and developed considerable skills. Indeed, Muskayah was the quintessential singer-dancer: celebrated as a vessel of the gods, she often performed at ritual events at sacred locations like river sources, ancestral graves and the ancient groves considered the final resting places of village guardian spirits (*dhanyang*) (Munardi 1996). Initially deriving spiritual authority from being a *tandhak tayub* and a mystical vessel, Muskayah’s biography suggests that her development of the *Srimpi Limo* purification tradition (*Srimpi Limo Ruwatan*) is unique to Malang. This powerful shamanic rite (performed throughout Java) mystically cures those suffering from illness, misfortune and possession by the evil and demonic ogre Bethoro Kolo. Because the dancers symbolically take the place of shadow puppets, *Srimpi Limo* is said to create the liminal cosmos necessary for the ritual purification (*ruwatan*) ceremony.

[^56]: The Islamic Sultanate of Mataram was the last major independent Javanese empire on Java before the island was colonised by the Dutch. It was the dominant political force in interior Central Java from the late sixteenth century until the beginning of the eighteenth century.

[^57]: Found throughout the Indonesian archipelago, M. Soleh Adi Pramono explained on more than one occasion that the Malang variant of *tayub* is historically linked with the dance, *Beskalan*, which is said to depict the warrior ‘flower of Malang’, Proboretno (Soleh, pers. comm. n.d.). Moreover, it is said to have existed long before the introduction of *ngremo* dance from Surabaya and Jombang eventually displaced it.
Muskayah is said to have always preceded ritual *Srimpi Limo* purification ceremony performances with the *Beskalan* dance (Munardi 1996) because of the association of both dances with traditional Javanese mystical symbolism. They are both said to concretise the concept, ‘four directions, five in the centre’ (*keblat papat limo pancer*). For example, in stage blockings and as *Beskalan* is typically performed, the dancer always moves through each of the five compass points before ending the dance at the centre of the stage (Restian 2012: 85-86). Similarly, arm gestures such as the ‘earth-sky’ (*bumi langit*) movement, in which the dancer alternately raises her extended arms just above eye level and then lowers them to thigh height, and her shifts between dancing on tip-toe and taking an unusually deep plié (*mendhak*), are said to depict the upper and lower cosmos. Unlike Western dance aesthetic in which the dancer fills the space around her, such expressions of Javanese *mendhak* centre the dancer and ground her energy.

The *Srimpi Limo* dance is likewise thought to represent the shape of humanity and create the world’s essence on stage. At the end of *Srimpi Limo ruwatan* dance performances, the puppet master carries out a ritualised purification ceremony. Explaining the sacred nature of the dance and the dancers, for example, the *dhalang* sings five ritual stanzas to explain how performances of *Srimpi Limo* performatively consecrate the ritual context necessary for effective purification ceremonies. The stanzas elaborate upon the ‘four siblings, five in the centre’ (*sedulur papat lima pancer*) (Munardi 1996: 43) symbolism inherent in *Srimpi Limo*. The first stanza, ‘Five is “four siblings, five in the centre” / The sister to the east is white / The bird is a stork / Deriving from ‘white’ blood / With the power to bring good fortune’ (Munardi 1996: 43) is followed by four more stanzas (see appendix A) that similarly describe each ‘sister’ in turn. For example, the ‘sister’ to the south is black, her bird is the raven, she derives from ‘purple’ blood and has the power to deflect danger.
The *dhalang* describes each sister/wind in turn before ending with the ‘sister’ in the middle. She wears a blue-green scarf and represents the self and the soul (Harini 2012: 65).

Further embodying this ritual configuration, the dancers’ costumes also articulate and reinforce this cosmological symbolism. For the most part the five female *Srimpi Limo* dancers wear identical costumes: black velvet bodices, belts and beaded frontice pieces, wrapped batik skirts in the ‘flower of the world’ (*sekar jagat*) design, and painted and filigreed leather headdresses. As each is a representative of a different ‘wind’, however, wrapped around her waist each dancer wears a different coloured dance scarf: white, black, yellow, red and teal. The depth of such mystical symbolism gives *Srimpi Limo*, like *Beskalan*, its spiritual potency. Equally as important, however, is the actual kinaesthetic construction of the dance itself.

After a musical introduction, the musicians play the sacred composition ‘To Remember’ (*Eling-eling*) that is considered ritually potent. During performances of *Srimpi limo* in ritual contexts, the dancers always perform to the sacred *gendhing* ‘To Remember’ (*Eling-eling*) Similarly, *tayub* ceremonies at sacred water sources, trees or burial grounds always begin with a ritual performance of *Eling-eling*. Upon hearing this music, the dancers file onto stage and, processing in a stylistic quick walk (*srisig*), take their positions: one at each point of a square and one in the centre (see figure 17). Behind them, the *dhalang* sits with the victim, the object of the ritual purification. The ‘patient’ who is to be ritually purified as part of the ceremony has been covered with a white cloth\(^{58}\) and sits cross-legged amongst the collected offerings and the pile of shadow puppets that will be used to tell the story of the ogre demon (the *murwokolo*), Bethoro Kolo.

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\(^{58}\) In Java, corpses are also typically wrapped in white cloth.
Figure 17. Srimpi Limo in August 1991. Djupri is second to the right; the author is on the left. Photo by David Schrieber and used with permission.

A section of stylised ‘preening’ movements then follows in which the dancers imitate putting on decorative earrings and bracelets, first to the right and then to the left. After each repetition or dance segment, the dancers together change positions: each moves to take the place vacated by the dancer who stands clockwise to her. At the end of five repetitions, the dancer has therefore stood at each corner of the square and in the centre. Following the fifth repetition, the tempo of the gamelan musical accompaniment slows and the dancers perform circular ‘earth-sky’ (bumi-langit) hand movements and gentle flicks of the scarves that are tied around their waists, facing first to the right and then to the left. A second ‘walking’ section follows. During a final fast section, the dancers return to the ‘preening’ movements that started the performance. The music slows then once again. This technique, a quickening tempo followed by a ritartando, typically cues the imminent arrival of the final gong stroke or a fluid shift into a new gamelan composition.

The dancers then take their final positions according to the colour of their dance scarves: white in the east; black to the north; yellow in the west; red to the
south; and finally, the teal-scarved dancer in the centre (see figure 18). As the dancers turn a full circle in place, lightly holding the beaded edges of their dance scarves in each hand, they lower themselves to a kneeling position. Considered the most sacred and pure offering to the ogre demon, Bethoro Kolo, seated in a square, the five dancers face the *dhalang*, Bethoro Kolo’s victim and the offerings. They perform one last slow, ritual prayer obeisance (*sembah*) to signal the end of the dance and the start of the purification ceremony to follow. As they sit amongst the fragrant offerings that have been placed around the shadow puppet screen, the musicians play another sacred composition, ‘Fragrant Flower’ (*Gandakusuma*) (Munardi 1996: 34-35). In performance, the specialist *dhalang* performs the exorcism and represents the gods. The *dhalang* intones special mantras that explain the symbolism of the *Srimpi limo* dance and then recounts the story of Bethoro Kolo. His ritual retelling of the story of Kolo’s birth precedes the exorcism ceremony. The story includes sacred mantra that serve to neutralise the monster, hold evil at bay and restore order to the universe (Headley: 2000: 89).

Figure 18. *Srimpi Limo* purification ceremony on Indonesian national TV. Author in the centre. Photographer unknown; collection of the author.
In Java, the ubiquitous myth of Bethoro Kolo (the *murwokolo*) addresses fundamental human questions about the origin and arbitrary nature of evil (Headley: 2000: 1). The monster Kolo was born from the spilt seed of the god Siva when he tried to rape his consort Uma (also called Durga or even Dewi Sri, the goddess of rice). Kolo subsequently acquired an appetite for flesh and became a danger to mankind when the goddess Durga, his mother, accidentally sliced off the tip of her finger and it fell into Kolo’s plate of rice. Upon realising the extent of Kolo’s dangerous powers, the gods decide to confront and deter him from feasting on mankind.

The mystical power ascribed to the *dhalang* who exert their will over the ogre Bethoro Kolo is similar to the magic potency ascribed to singer-dancers. The *Srimpi Limo* dance is considered the most sacred of all the performance offerings (Munardi 1996: 36-37) because the five *Srimpi Limo* dancers embody mystical symbolism. The dance of the five *Srimpi*, who represent the four soul ‘sisters’ stolen by Bethoro Kolo, is offered in exchange for the ‘patient’, or the object of the purification ceremony. Once the ceremony reclaims and ritually purifies the victim’s soul, the victim is freed of all physical and mental affliction. The five dancers then quickly file from the stage (Munardi 1996: 34-35). The mystical ‘five’ as personified by *Beskalan* and the five *Srimpi Limo* dancers is considered especially spiritually powerful because it reflects the progressive stages of Javanese mysticism. The *dhalang*’s use of poetic texts and sung verses points to the importance of oral magic within ritual contexts. In particular, the regionally rich and popular epic poetry tradition, *macapat*, replete with spiritual potency, is believed to reflect the progression of humanity from birth to death.
Sung Verse Forms (*Macapat*)

Performances of the Javanese epic poetry tradition called *macapat*\(^{59}\) are unique from other types of Javanese theatre.\(^{60}\) Generally considered an important repository of cultural identity and history, all night performances of *macapat* epic sung poetry have largely been replaced by modern popular music genres such as *dangdut* (a popular dance music that emerged in the late 1960s that combines local music traditions, Indian and Malaysian film musics and Western rock) and *campursari* (a popular style of music that combines elements of *kroncong*,\(^{61}\) Javanese gamelan and Western rock). I first met respected oral theatre ‘puppeteer’ (*dhalang macapat*), Ki Supatman (also known as *Pak* Supat) in 1992 after he and his wife joined activities at the PSMD.

_Pak* Supatman, a former *tandhak* performer in the transvestite *ludruk* theatre, is one of the few remaining practitioners of the unique Malang-style *macapat* sung poetry tradition. *Pak* Supat often bemoaned *macapat*’s future and enthusiastically took me on as his *macapat Malangan* student. I subsequently studied and performed with him for over 15 years. Staged presentations of *macapat* traditionally include performances by two or three performers – the *dhalang macapat*, a second *dhalang* (who ‘interprets’ the poetic verses) and at least one female singer. Throughout the evening, the *dhalang macapat* and the singer take turns singing stanzas from that evening’s chosen text, usually one of several extant historical epics (*layang*).\(^{62}\) *Pak* Supat provides plucked zither (*siter*) accompaniment. The singers also act out various important characters in the stories. The second *dhalang* interprets the sung

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\(^{60}\) Many other kinds of theatrical forms such as indigenous opera and dance drama are said to have originated from *macapat* (Hastanto 1983: 124).

\(^{61}\) Now considered old-fashioned folk music, *kroncong* is an indigenous hybrid influenced by late nineteenth-century Portuguese music, Western rock ‘n’ roll and Javanese gamelan.

\(^{62}\) The stories (*layang*) _Amat Mohamat_ and _Yusup_ are the most often requested. *Pak* Supat has written/retold many other stories such as _Sungging_, _Lahire Aji Soko_, _Babat Tanah Jawi_, _Mursada_, _Lokayanti_, _Abdul Klabang_, _Sujinah_, _Bang Sri Setya Setuha_ and _Tapel Adam_ or the story of Adam and Eve.
verses, interjects comic elements and elaborates or abbreviates the story in a way similar to that of shadow puppeteers. The ability to sing verses at random in this way is based on the expectation that any singer of Javanese verse worth his or her salt can correctly and artfully sight-sing unknown texts on the spot. Indeed, it is possible to do so because of the metrically structured nature of *macapat* verse forms.

The Malang tradition of *macapat* recognises 13 distinct verse forms that are differentiated according to a ‘song guide’ (*guru lagu*): first, by the number of lines (*gatra*) in the verse; second, by the number of syllables (*lampah*) in each line; and, third, by the last vowel of each line. By following the structural rules for each verse form, for example, new *macapat* verses may be composed with ease. Singing prescribed melodies for each verse form’s metrical structure produces appropriate and ‘correct’ *macapat* performances. Indeed, every *macapat* verse form is said to have a unique character that derives from its particular metrical structure. Successful performances of *macapat* verses must therefore adhere to the rules that ascribe certain characters and moods to particular poetic structures (Hastanto 1983: 124) (see figure 19). With reference to the Malang *macapat* performance tradition, the following table documents the characteristics that Pak Supat ascribes to the thirteen most common East Javanese *macapat* verses.

Figure 19. Table of *Macapat* Character and Mood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse form</th>
<th>Character</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Asmaradana</em></td>
<td>To do with the heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dhandhanggula</em></td>
<td>Flashing thoughts and worry, suitable for narrative passages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

63 Please refer to the Lecture-Demonstration for further discussion of the mechanics of devising and performing *macapat* verse forms.
Pak Supat was careful to always choose the *macapat* verse form best suited to his subject. Indeed, because certain verse forms are said to best reflect certain moods or humours (Hastanto 1983: 124), some verse forms are appropriate for love songs (*asmaradana, sinom*), some for didactic material (*pucung, dhandhanggula*), some for confrontation (*pangkur, durmo*) whilst some are considered melancholic (*gambuh*). It would be difficult, therefore, to convey the violence of an argument if it were cast in the amorous *asmorodono* verse form (after Hardjowirogo 1952: 67, cited in Arps 1992: 87-88).

Unlike the rules that directed my choices about verse forms based on mood and character, my melodic choices for each *Srimaya’s Fall* poetic stanza were based on entirely different factors. For example, Poem One: *White* is about beginnings and therefore, because of shared association with beginnings, a stanza of *Sinom* introduced the Beskalan dance. *Sinom* is one of the most popular *macapat* verse
forms, however, and as a consequence offers many melodic choices. In this case, because Beskalan is typically performed in the gamelan orchestra’s pelog tuning system, and so that the verse would lead harmoniously into the dance, the most appropriate choice was to sing this introductory Sinom stanza in pelog. Similarly, because Beskalan is an East Javanese dance, I sang an East Javanese sinom melody. Using all of these principles as a guideline, I selected key events from my 2006 unpublished manuscript and fit them into the overall macapat structure of the recital. In devising the recital in this way, I planned to expand and integrate my use of poetic language to accommodate the dramatic narrative.

Realisation of the Narrative

The association of Javanese mystical symbolism with macapat made it an ideal vehicle for the written narrative. Not only are macapat verses used as introductory stanzas to popular songs (bawa) and as the structural foundations of many gendhing, but contemporary macapat is also characterised by innovation and artistic license. For example, Pak Supat freely combines regional and genre styles when he performs the new stories (layang) that he regularly composes. Indeed, this prodigious verse form genre has long inspired Javanese music practitioners. While it is now uncommon to compose new full-length works, Pak Supat often rewrote old texts and composed new macapat layang based on historical events. He also conscientiously injects his performances with the most up-to-date songs and elements of popular culture. Pak Supat is also, like many professional musicians and composers, often called upon to script new content-specific verses for various performance contexts. For example, a verse might be written to promote a particular candidate during a political campaign or to contextualise a particular scene in a dance drama. Following

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64 Whilst I sang all of the narrative macapat content for the second recital in English, I chose to sing non-narrative content in Javanese. I chose to perform in this way in order to distinguish narrative segments of the performance from expository, non-descriptive sections.
Pak Supat’s holistic approach, as I began to compose my narrative I also incorporated other elements of the East Javanese repertoire, such as sendhon and guriso, and various Central Javanese gamelan compositions.

The first recital reproduced a ‘text-perfect performance artefact’ when I, like Pak Supat, prefaced my performance with ritual macapat prayer stanzas in Javanese. I had performed these stanzas because the inclusion of such invocations is common practice in Java. In light of this, I wished to mirror the respect shown by such performance traditions that acknowledge resident spirits, beg their forgiveness for any unintentional slights during the performance and ask for their support for the successful completion of the event. In composing the overture before Poem One: White of Srimaya’s Fall, I subverted this practice by performing a stanza of asmorodono that was not intended as a sincere invocation to the gods, but mimicked such liminal supplications to introduce the performance themes of dreams, demons and trouble.

Following this introductory stanza in the performance of Srimaya’s Fall, the narrative is divided into five ‘poems’ that reflect Srimaya’s progression through each of five cosmic phases that relate to the mystical principle of keblat papat limo pancer. The English-language macapat verse narrative structurally mirrors this Javanese cosmological essentialisation of the number five as follows: Poem One: White is focused on Srimaya’s initiation into the Javanese performance world. Following Srimaya’s dangerous illness believed to be part of ritual processes that bring spiritual gifts (see also Wolbers 1993), spirits visit Srimaya’s fever-induced dreams to bring her the gift of the Beskalan dance (literally ‘beginnings’). Poem Two: Black describes Srimaya’s progression into womanhood. Upon receiving this

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65 Mood songs typically sung by East Javanese shadow puppeteer.
66 Briefly they are: living by appearances and social laws; consciously reflecting on the outer world; taking the first steps towards a fuller inner life; beginning to confront the Truth; and obtaining inner harmony and unity with the self.
boon, and following local custom, Srimaya becomes an itinerant Beskalan singer-dancer, that is, a Malang-style *tandhak tayub*. Poem Three: *Yellow* uses *Dhandhanggula* verses to describe the dangers of Srimaya’s increasing power. Through her successful performance activities, Srimaya gains considerable skill, such that the spirits pay her another visit to ‘give’ her a second, magical dance associated with mystical power. Srimaya thus becomes a shaman (*dukun*). When Srimaya performs the movements of this dance with four other dancers, together the five embody the cosmic order. Indeed, the dancers represent the mystical ‘five’ of the Javanese pantheon and performatively create the staged liminal cosmos necessary for traditional ritual purification ceremonies (*ruwatan*).

In *Srimaya’s Fall*, the dancers represent the five ‘winds’ pertinent to Javanese mysticism. Joining forces with nine associate student artists facilitated staging this cosmos: four joined me in the *Beskalan* and *Srimpi Limo* dances while the remaining five represented the forces of evil who overwhelm the five *Srimpi* dancers at the end of Poem Three: *Yellow* and this portends Srimaya’s unavoidable defeat. Poem Four: *Red* contains the lusty, passionate and fiery *Grebeg Sabrang*67 demon dance. In Poem Five: *Teal*, and after succumbing to the inexorable power of the demons, Srimaya enters a meditative state, seeking inner harmony and peace within herself. The final mood song (*sendhon serang*) cues the coming of the dawn.

The dances performed in the second recital, albeit traditional, were reworked/re-choreographed based on my embodied understanding of Javanese performance structures and in order to make them more context specific. This was done to accommodate the Westernised theatricality of the narrative content. Unlike the dances included in the first recital, the dances chosen for *Srimaya’s Fall* were functionally appropriate and intended to organically reflect the work’s narrative

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67 Called ‘Soldier March of the “Other”’, *Grebeg Sabrang* depicts soldiers from ‘across the ocean’ who are understood to be evil and uncontrollably emotional (the antithesis of heightened spirituality).
Beskalan showcased Srimaya’s first itinerant tayub dance. Ritual Srimpi Limo and powerful Grebeg Sabrang pitted benevolent and malevolent forces against one another. In contrast to the Beskalan/Srimpi Limo dancers who moved in a refined female style, never looked at the audience, and presented a portrait of successful mystical control and detached, contained emotion, the demons fought, screamed and attacked one another. Large moustaches, eyebrows and sideburns blackened their faces as they stared boldly into the audience. Whilst traditional, therefore, the dances presented in Srimaya’s Fall were recontextualised to enable them to be more than fossilised, ‘authentic’ performance artefacts.

The Dances

I adopted the common contemporary Javanese practice of shortening dances by cutting some of the numerous repetitions typical to traditional versions. I also planned further edits to the overall duration of each dance to make them more palatable to my Perth audience. In preparing to once again record audio-visual backing tracks with the musicians in Java, I consulted my collection of PSMD audio and visual recordings. I planned to heighten their visual and symbolic impact. For example, as part of the overall blocking and staging, I choreographed a fourth kneeled obeisance (sembah)\(^68\) in Beskalan, which typically contains only three. I believed that this would be more theatrically and ‘ritually’ effective. It was essential that Srimaya face each of the four compass directions in turn; three sembah would not impart the same visually constructed, symbolically danced cosmology on stage.

Similarly, in my revisions to Srimpi Limo, I selected the sequences that best fit the Srimaya’s Fall narrative and highlighted the dance’s sacred content. I had first performed Srimpi Limo with Djupri, grandson of Muskayah, the historical inspiration

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\(^{68}\) A sembah is a gesture of respect in which the hands are placed palms together in front of the dancer’s face as she kneels.
for my heroine, Srimaya in December 1990 at the PSMD. Djupri, now the traditional ‘owner’ of this dance, like Pak Supat, also had his start as a transvestite performer in ludruk and, therefore, chose on this occasion to dress in female costume and lead the other four dancers. Djupri is also the dhalang who performs ritual purification ceremonies associated with the Five Srimpi dance in Ngadireso. Indeed, during the 1990s, Srimpi Limo was often performed at secular events due to the tourism fever (demam pariwisata) (Munardi 1996: 40) that swept through Java and resulted in the secularisation of many hitherto sacred dances. In light of such desacralisation, on a number of occasions when Djupri performed at PSMD he explicitly instructed his dancers to omit sacred elements (Djupri, pers. comm. August 1991). He did this in secular performances, he would tell the dancers, in order to protect Srimpi Limo’s potency.

In presenting Srimpi Limo in the context of my Srimaya’s Fall performance, I similarly eliminated portions of the dance, but for other reasons. In my case, I chose to remove sections of the dance that I believed lacked gravitas. Likewise choosing to alter certain aspects of the dancers’ appearance to make it less traditional, the Srimaya’s Fall costumes correspondingly aimed for a contemporised look (see figure 20). I chose to update the Javanese costuming by dressing the five Srimpi dancers in long wrapped bodice cloths that I printed with poem-appropriate symbols. The five colours of the costumes (white, black, yellow, red and teal) and original prints with which I branded them together represented the symbolism of the five ‘winds’ or directions. The cloths were pinned tightly at the back, leaving a length of fabric to trail behind the dancer. The costumes were further accessorised with colour coordinated dance scarves cinched at the waist and anchored with matching belts.
Figure 20. *Srimaya’s Fall* curtain call: the author (centre) with associate artists. Photo by Wendy Jones and used with permission.

The ‘Soldier March of the “Other”’ (*Grebeg Sabrang*) in Poem Four: *Red* was unlike the first two dances, *Beskalan* and *Srimpi Limo*. Although based on traditional masked drama, it is in fact considered a ‘new composition’ or ‘creation’ (*kreasi baru*). Again to contemporise and contextualise the dance, the *Srimaya’s Fall* demons did not wear masks nor did they represent a foreign ‘other’. Rather, and with faces painted with black demon makeup, the *Srimaya’s Fall* demons represented the powers of evil and the antithesis of the ‘good’ *Srimpi Limo* dancers. Specifically, the demons’ costumes reflected this recontextualisation. In contrast to the five *Srimpi* dancers costumed in individualised, poem-specific colours, the demons dressed identically: black tights and singlets, red beaded aprons, red cloths branded with a printed demon motif and red scarves printed with golden flames and accessorised with gold beads. I retained much of the original *kreasi baru* choreography but, in addition to shortening the dance, I also introduced an excerpted experimental ‘serpent’ (*naga*) section that heightened what the musicians in Java and I considered

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69 So-called because it depicts soldiers from ‘across the ocean’ who are understood to be evil and uncontrollably emotional (the antithesis of heightened spirituality).
a contemporary, edgy and non-traditional feel to the dance. Lacking any recording of this innovation prior to recording in Tumpang, however, the gamelan musicians skilfully reconstructed the segment’s unique melody to incorporate it into the final version of the dance.

Analogously, the dance included in the final poem, Poem Five: *Teal*, is another example of a creative composition (*kreasi baru*) based on traditional dance vocabulary. The *gendhing* ‘Buzzing Fly’ (*Laler Mengeng*) performed in Poem Five: *Teal* is not usually accompanied by dance nor are dance movements usually associated with such refined *gendhing*. Indeed, this piece is considered especially plaintive, forlorn and sacred due to its many flattened/lowered pitches (*barang miring*). In constructing Poem Five: *Teal*, however, I incorporated movement into the sung performance of the *gendhing*. The forlorn, refined female style movements with which the four sections of the piece were divided were intended to mirror the *sembah* section of Poem One: *White*. Here, however, performed solo, the movements embodied the *gendhing*’s plaintive, keening mood. The recital ended with the end of the *gendhing* as the demons slithered onto stage and, standing over Srimaya, stared fiercely into the audience as the lights faded to black.

Whilst the individual *macapat* verse forms were chosen for each of the five poems based on their unique mood and character, the dances were selected to reflect aspects of the recital narrative. Similarly, the backing tracks aimed to provide glimpses of village life and thereby visually inform the narrative. Each of the two audio-visual recordings made in 2011 and 2012 provide unique glimpses of traditional Javanese performance spaces. The 2011 footage suggests a formal production with musicians dressed in performance uniforms sitting at attention on a raised stage with coloured satin backdrops. The 2012 recordings are more intimate.

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70 Whilst many musicians in Central Java refuse to play *Laler Mengeng* except as part of funerary rites (Mahesi, November 2012), the same prohibition does not exist in East Java.
and intentionally casual. Rather than presenting a rented performance stage and formally attired musicians, Javanese daily life entirely infuses the soundscapes of the second group of recordings. Like the *Srimaya’s Fall* performance that depicts the inescapability of the five progressive stages of life, the video recordings – filled with the ambient noises of trucks, motorcycles, grinding mills and laughing children – suggest that there is no ‘off-stage’.

**Brief description of *Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle***

Unlike *In the Demon’s Circle* that was performed in the UWA Callaway Music Auditorium without stage, sound or lighting, *Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle* was performed in the Mount Lawley Senior High School Tricycle Theatre. The black box theatre includes balconies on both sides of the stage and the high school arts staff and SVAPA students facilitated rudimentary sound and lighting. The following is a description from the UWA DVD recording: As the audience enters the performance space, the catcalls, moans and screams of the demons in the balcony provide ambience in the darkened theatre. The stage is minimally lit by the video projected on the back wall of the stage. I enter to backing track introductory music and sing an East Javanese *asmaradana* that mimicks an invocational prayer but introduces the evening’s dark themes of death, possession and demons. ‘Poem One – White – Srimaya Begins’ is projected briefly onto the back wall followed by information about the associated symbolism of the colour white. I then sing two stanzas of *sinom* in the East Javanese style that describe Srimaya’s initial fever and how she became a *tandhak tayub* and began performing *Beskalan*. The final melodic note of the second *sinom* cues the start of the *Beskalan* dance. The gamelan accompaniment backing-track plays on the back wall as it does throughout the performance, and the four other *Srimpi/Beskalan* dancers join me on stage. I sing
East Javanese ABAB rhyming couplets (parikan) in Javanese throughout the dance. Having taken a kneeling position at the end of the dance with the other four dancers seated behind me in a square configuration, I sing a sendhon (from the East Javanese pedhalangan repertoire) in English that describes Srimaya’s travels as a tandhak tayub. ‘Poem One – White – Srimaya Begins’ ends and ‘Poem Two – Black – Srimaya Becomes a Pesindhen’ is projected on the screen followed by information about the associated East Javanese symbolism of the colour black.

I then sing a third sinom, this time in a Central Javanese style with gender accompaniment. The dancers and I together perform choreographed movements to this verse. Mijil follows, performed as the popular Central Javanese short composition, Mijil Kethoprak, with gamelan accompaniment and male chorus calls and vocables. The verse describes Srimaya’s start on her quest for spiritual knowledge. ‘Poem Two – Black – Srimaya Becomes a Pesindhen’ ends as ‘Poem Three – Yellow – The Ritual Purification’ flashes on screen. Information about the associated symbolism of the colour yellow follows.

‘Poem Three – Yellow – The Ritual Purification’ starts with the popular classical Central Javanese gendhing, ayak-ayak manyura, a composition that often accompanies the start of Central Javanese shadow puppet performances. I sing poetic Javanese-language AA rhyming couplets (wangsalan); the lyrics here were not intended to convey narrative content. The ayak-ayakan transitions into the Central Javanese gendhing Dhandanggula Tlutur. I sing two stanzas of dhandhanggula to this gendhing accompaniment. The narrative content hints at the story of the ogre Bethoro Kolo, as well as Srimaya’s struggles with the burden of her mystical knowledge. The gendhing accompaniment ends. I then sing two more dhandhanggula stanzas in the Malang style that further describe the dangers of mystical knowledge. Siter and gambang (a xylophone-like wooden instrument)
accompany these *dhandhanggula*. The final verse ends and is superimposed with the start of the *Srimpi Limo* dance accompaniment. Footage is again projected on the back wall of the gamelan musicians performing. The four other dancers and I then perform *Srimpi Limo*. During the slow section half way through the dance, and during which I once again sing Javanese language *wangsalan*, the demons appear on stage and disrupt the performance. They fight and attack one another until one demon, symbolically my counterpart (although this may have been understated in the performance), falls prey to her compatriots. The four *Srimpi* dancers and I then attempt a ritual purification for the fallen demon, but Srimaya’s mystical power prove insufficient to the task. Taking control, the demons drive off the other *Srimpi* dancers whilst, onstage, the fallen demon and I collapse.

Following a 15-minute interval, ‘Poem Four – Red – The Demons’ flashes on the screen along with information about the associated symbolism of the colour red. An introductory Act II *mijil* stanza introduces the demons as they take to the stage, victorious. Over the gamelan dance accompaniment and from off stage, I sing a *greget saut*, a mood song usually sung by *dhalang* during moments of heightened tension. I then sing *parikan* in English throughout the demons’ *Grebeg Sabrang* dance. After the denouement of ‘Poem Four – Red – The Demons’, ‘Poem Five – Teal – Srimaya’s Fall’ flashes on the screen with information about the associated symbolism of the colour teal. I sing a stanza of East Javanese *pangkur* that describes the fatalistic inevitability of the demons’ victory before singing and dancing to the Central Javanese *gendhing* ‘Buzzing Fly’ (*Laler Mengeng*). At the end of the *gendhing*, the backing-track projection shows archival images of a traditional Javanist shaman (*dukun*) from Malang’s Mount Bromo praying at PSMD. The set darkens as the demons surround me on stage. The performance concludes with a pre-recorded morning verse, *sendhon serang*, which in East Javanese shadow puppetry
performances traditionally ends the performance by describing the crowing of the rooster and the coming of the dawn.

**Programme Notes**

The programme notes for the second recital (see appendix C) provided information meant to clarify and enhance what was happening onstage. Because it was based on a work that I had written while still living in Indonesia, my original manuscript assumed a significant depth of cultural knowledge. I worried that anyone without personal experience of Indonesia’s rich culture and traditions of magic and mysticism would again fail to engage with the performance. It was clear (based on what I had learned from the first recital) that presenting Javanese works as stage productions for Western audiences requires creative approaches to make the foreign cultural material accessible. The programme was also intended as an antidote to the non-theatrical voice-overs that had featured in the first recital.

Whilst it had been contextually appropriate to the retrospective nature of the first recital, such ethnographic material felt antithetical to the theatrical spirit of *Srimaya’s Fall*. The programme notes were intended, therefore, to provide background and pithy explanations of certain elements of the Javanese performance arts without overwhelming members of the audience. The programme offered an overview of the story and descriptions of the moods and elements that characterised each poem. It also reproduced the poetic narrative text in full with definitions of unfamiliar terms to highlight the poetic structure of the event. Audience members could choose to avail themselves of as much information as they chose; those in the audience who wished to experientially enjoy the performance without being ‘informed’ could easily ignore the programme text or refer to it later at their leisure.
The notes were intended, therefore, to offer just one of many performance ‘texts’ with which the story of *Srimaya’s Fall From the Demon’s Circle* was told.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has provided information about the preparation and presentation of the recital, *Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle*. Following introductory material about Javanese mystical beliefs and the ways in which Javanese performatively portray the mystical cosmos, the chapter has provided specific examples of performed mysticism such as the *Beskalan* and *Srimpi Limo* dances and the traditional epic poetry tradition, *macapat*. A discussion of how these dances and the structure of *macapat* were adapted to the present work followed. For example, writing English-language texts to *macapat* verse forms and judiciously editing traditionally lengthy dances allowed me to tailor the Javanese cultural material to my audience and to the students who joined me as associate artists. Finally, after describing the actual performance event, the chapter has concluded with a discussion of the importance and effectiveness of the programme notes that accompanied *Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle*. Critical feedback and the reflexive process have importantly informed this creative work. The following and final chapter will reflect on my overall research and performance process as well as the successes and failures of my performance recitals and lecture-demonstration.
Chapter 5:

Teal – Embracing the Demon’s Circle

This thesis has investigated my transition from trained Javanese performing artist working in Indonesia to syncretic arts practitioner in Perth, Western Australia. In so doing, the project has contributed to scholarly debates concerning intercultural arts practice and production in the fields of ethnomusicology, performance studies and auto-ethnography. Before turning to the particular theoretical contributions of this research, however, the current chapter first examines the methodologies used and how they have facilitated a detailed analysis of my researcher/practitioner journey. As indicated in the introduction to the exegesis, my critical reflections on the creative components of this project derive from two distinct methodological perspectives. The first, grounded in the social sciences, takes an auto-ethnographic and self-reflective approach to the performance trajectory of my physical and psychological move from Indonesia to Australia. ‘[M]ulti-local’ or ‘multisited’ (Wulff 2002: 126), that is, based on my experiences in Perth and in Indonesia, the project also documents ‘a process rather than a slice of time’ (Wulff 2002: 122). Further, capturing the ‘work-process of learning to understand’ (Mrázek 2005: 2), the exegesis offers an innovative approach to performance research by weaving together Western critical theory and Javanese mystical belief. In so doing, the project has considered specifically how the two performance recitals creatively interrogate the metaphor of the ‘demon’s circle’.

The demon’s circle, denoting, for example, a vicious circle or absurd, no-win situation, initially emerged as a tool of the artistic processes in the first recital, In the Demon’s Circle, performed in 2012. As a retrospective piece, the first recital explored the tensions inherent in the demon’s circle and how I had been caught in such a no-win situation: that is, my untenable identity as a Javanese performing
artist. Such tensions are, in fact, relevant to any professional performing artist who learns music and dance skills in one cultural context and presents such techniques to audiences in another. In my case, the demon’s circle reflected the internal clash between my various performing arts personas: the educational multicultural singer-dancer; the ritual tandhak tayub and pesindhen; the bintang tamu performer who is paid to entertain; and, finally, the artist who produces, with vulnerability and clarity, expressions of her individual truth. The innovations and insights that I brought to preparing the second recital, Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle in 2013, aimed to refract these discordances by producing them in critically self-reflective performances. Unpacking the various cultural elements of my personal and artistic identity, the successes, failures and novelty contributions of my performance works suggest new ways of engaging with my embodied performing arts heritage.

**Artistic Insights**

Within the performing arts community in Java, I was defined on stage and off by my roles as dancer, tandhak tayub, pesindhen and finally bintang tamu. In 2011, my decision to enrol in a performance-based doctoral program was based on what seemed the logical desire to establish a multicultural dance and music career in Perth, Western Australia. The succeeding years, and the creative components produced as part of this project, have shown multiculturalism to be an uncomfortable fit. Shortly after arriving in Australia and through the process of developing the two DMA performance recitals and the lecture-demonstration, I realised that I could not present traditional Javanese music and dance compositions in the manner to which I had become accustomed in Indonesia. On the whole, and for cultural, linguistic and artistic reasons, Australian audiences found such performances difficult to understand.
Informed by my seminal experiences in East Java’s rural communities in which ‘tradition’ is ‘produced at different points in time in different contexts’, the recitals presented dynamic traditions that are ‘transient, not enduring, and not conforming to a type’ (after Steiner and Reisinger 2006: 303). I therefore ran afoul of certain multiculturalist expectations (see for example Bharucha 1984; Dasgupta 1987; Cohen, M. 2007, 2010). For scholars of multiculturalism, performing Java outside of Indonesia is not necessarily intended primarily to ‘entertain’, but rather to ‘open doors for intercultural communication’ (Cohen, M. 2007: 23). Despite my initial efforts to ‘educate’ my In the Demon’s Circle audience, the recital did not, in the end, present ‘original’ performance texts (after Cook, N. 2003: 207) that were instructive or educational. This was because it had become clear to me that presenting works akin to museum exhibits, “‘frozen” in a traditional past’ (Dunbar-Hall 2001: 175), ignores the dynamic nature of the living performing arts traditions that I had learned first hand (after Johnson 2000: 283). Adopting the ‘analytical stance that everything is authentic in its own way’ (Wulff 2002: 127), I was drawn to non-traditional approaches to the material. The self-reflective performance recitals and lecture-demonstration, ‘while respecting that certain cultural forms are regarded as emblems for “traditions”’ (Wulff 2002: 127), presented my Javanese performance artefacts in the context of my evolving ‘existential authenticity’ (Cohen, E 1979).

The narratives of my embodied practice shifted from their ‘original sociocultural contexts’ to the ‘newly adopted milieu’ (McIntosh 2005: 12) of my academic research. Exploring the issues of authenticity, identity and cultural mediation as they relate to my embodied, Javanese singer and dancer practice has offered me ‘the chance to reflect on the music’ (McIntosh 2005: 25), dance and theatre that once surrounded me in my everyday life. Successfully performing
outside of Indonesia has meant using these explorations to develop ‘techniques that best suit the needs’ of my new audience (after McIntosh 2005: 24).

The liminal works of contemporary performance art that have resulted from this process capitalise on the hermeneutical ‘arcs’ of my professional development (after Rice 1994, 1995) and provide insights into the ‘sociocreative process[es]’ (McIntosh 2005: 25) of my former musical world. Solely responsible for the aesthetic organisation of my cultural knowledge (after McIntosh 2005: 24), creating auto-ethnographic work has involved mining the richly nuanced world of my various performing arts personas. In choosing to focus on the tandhak tayub and pesindhen roles that most defined me throughout my career in Java, such an interrogation has shed greater light on the performance ‘texts’ that have long defined me. Highly formalised, performances by singer-dancers in such ritual events follow the intentionality of ‘the text closely’ (Berger 2009: 107).

Falling into the role of the traditional performer willy-nilly, as a singer of gendhing, I was defined by the ‘contemporary cultural concept of the pesindhèn’ whose ‘historical image is the pesindhèn of male imagination’ (Sutton 1989: 125). Indeed, the singer-dancer tradition in Java is closely associated with the ‘notion of female sexual freedom, prostitution, and the power to attract the male’ (Sutton 1989: 113). Supporting this association, many discussions of female singer-dancers include one particular origin myth that specifically ascribes the creation of the tandhak tayub to three men (Holt 1967; Sutton 1989). The story describes how three male artisans, a wood carver, a goldsmith and a tailor, created the original singer-dancer, Juru I Angin. Described as ‘instruments of divine will’ (Holt 1967: 113), after creating her, the three men then travel with Juru I Angin as itinerant performers.

Like such tandhak who are ‘indebted to men for making her what she is’ (Sutton 1989: 120), I belonged to the deeply rooted Javanese tradition in which
public dancing ‘of an erotic kind’ has historically featured female singer-dancers (Pioquinto 1995: 61). ‘[M]ore important’ than ‘musical talent’ (Pioquinto 1995: 70), the beauty and sexuality of the dancer’s body serves as a conduit through which ritual obligations are fulfilled. The dancer is proffered alongside other requisite ritual items such as rice offerings, bananas or incense. In such ritual contexts, the \textit{tandhak}’s ‘performing object is the body itself, without screen or mask’ (Cohen, M. 2002: 171-2) and her identity is culturally and historically constructed.

Ironically, my accomplishments and abilities as \textit{tandhak tayub, pesindhen gendhing} and dancer are as unusual as my undeniable oddity as a cultural import. As the arts of Indonesia become increasingly more specialised and desacralised, the specifically multi-talented and spiritually potent roles of the singer-dancer continue to disappear, transformed into the more manageable, western-inspired concept of the ‘\textit{artis}’ who perform Indonesian pop, \textit{campursari} and \textit{dangdut} (for further discussion see Pioquinto 1995, Suharto 1999, Sutton 1989, Wallach 2008, Weintraub 2010, Widodo 1995). Thanks to the ‘march of history’, many Javanese ritual contexts have been ‘appropriated in the process of modernization to become forms of modern commodified leisure activities’ (Pioquinto 1995: 61).

Whilst some scholars argue that the popular genre of \textit{dangdut} has ‘retained much of the centuries-old tradition of female dancing which highlights the role of the female singer-dancer, suffused with eroticism’ despite its ‘modern appearance and contemporary popular character’ (Pioquinto 1995: 61), on the contrary, the spiritual potency of female singer-dancers is clearly one of the casualties of modernisation and the commodification of the arts in Indonesia. Feeling these changes long before I left Indonesia, I now realise that my original ambition to present my auto-ethnographic performances ‘authentically’ was scuppered by the problematic nature of an authenticity that no longer exists. Saturated with contextually specific images
of my potent singer-dancer body, it was inevitable that transplanting my adoptive Javanese identity to Perth, Western Australia would cause me significant discomfort.

My performances of Javanese and Javanese-inspired material in Perth highlighted, among other things, the tension between the modern and the traditional. My experiments with syncreticism also aimed to articulate the discrepancy between my ‘ideal conception and actual life’ in Java (Cohen, E. 1979: 196). By attempting to critically reflect upon and mediate my performances, I became more and more unlike the traditional singer-dancer in Java who ‘does not attempt to interpret the text’ (Sutton 1989: 125). Rather, she aims, whilst singing, only ‘to add to the beauty of a particular moment to please her audience’ (Sutton 1989: 121). Giving prominence ‘to the singer over the song’ (Berger 2009: 107) loosened the corset strings of such cultural obligation and liberated my ‘essential nature’ (after Steiner and Reisinger 2006: 299). The voice-over narratives during In the Demon’s Circle, for example, provided interpretive (and generally negative) depictions of sitting ‘at each drunken table in turn’ during typically interminable tayub evenings. Images of the men who ‘pushed money (and invitations) into our satin sheaths, their ragged nails nicking our powdered skin’ similarly offered atmospheric portraits of the long nights that ‘wore on as we moved from table to table’ (see appendix B for full text) and actively drew attention to the object that is the tandhak’s performing body.

Creating work in Perth exposed my ‘personal crisis of meaninglessness, futility and disenchantment’ (Cohen, E. 1979: 196). My efforts to re-produce contexts that have fallen victim to modernisation and the increasing desacralisation of the traditional performing arts were, in fact, largely futile. Merely reproducing the superficial trappings of these performance events was unconstructive and fell on deaf ears.
What Happened When I Became an Artist in My Own Right

The purpose of the first recital – to provide a performance retrospective and present multiculturality in new socio-cultural spaces – was only successful in reflecting my life as a student of Javanese cultural forms. The initial version of *In the Demon’s Circle*, as it was presented in the mini-recital, offered only a cabaret-style review of my performing arts career in Indonesia. Subsequently informed by self-reflective, performative auto-ethnography, revisions to the recital that introduced both *in situ* video recordings and voice-over ethnographic reflections provided alternative interpretations of the performance texts and effectively objectified me as one of the performance artefacts. Bi-musical in essence (after Hood 1960), this approach both demonstrated my facility with Javanese cultural material and was a first step towards the ‘attainment of authentic selfhood’ (Kim and Jamal 2007: 184).

I began, through this self-reflective process, to capitalise upon my decidedly individual perspective on Javanese and Javanese-inspired performing arts materials outside of Indonesia. For example, again considering the voice-over texts of the first recital, ethnographic descriptions created a sensorial image of my initial visit to the village of Tumpang. The descriptive list of dancing bells, flocking and wailing children, roosters crowing and ‘wooden mallets pounding over metal keys’, collectively suggested the overwhelming and assaulting noise made by the crowds of villagers who ‘watch us as we watch them’. This portion of the voice-over narrative also mimicked the musical cadence of the pre-recorded backing track by ending, finally, with the ‘resonance of a sudden gong stroke’ timed with the gong heard in the music. With the benefit of hindsight, I now realise that the abundance of negative images in these descriptive passages – for example, the discomfort of the ‘rented white plastic chairs’ – unknowingly foreshadowed my future malaise when I eventually discovered the discrepancy between my ‘ideal conception and actual life’ in Java (Cohen, E. 1979: 196). Such discomfort is initially obscured and mitigated by
the exotic novelty of the ‘southern stars’ and the cool wind that ‘envelops me in great clouds of fragrant smoke’.

The definition I provide of myself as a tandhak tayub later during the In the Demon’s Circle performance is also coloured by my ambivalence towards my ‘Muslim, tropical’ experience. Female performers, I note in the text, are variously perceived as ‘saviour-whore, mother-daughter, vessel-vehicle’. In the concluding portion of this narrative, audience members are re-introduced to the cultural cacophony that, the text implies, inundated me throughout my time in Java. The prose poem ends when ‘the dhalang raps an abrupt dedok-dok-dok that sounds loud above the clanging of the wooden mallets and the winding trills of the female vocalist’ (see appendix B for full text). Hinting at the various cultural elements that warred within me, the pesindhen is created through the male gaze while the singer’s voice is masked by the dhalang’s pounding mallet.

In presenting such self-reflective texts, the first recital portrayed me as powerless within the inevitability of my performance trajectory: victim of the ‘friends’ who ‘purchase black magic’ to make me ‘lose my voice, forget my lyrics’ and ‘look old and sink, finally, into obscurity’. The line, ‘[f]or five long years I danced with men for money – day after day and night after night’ implies how from early on I felt impotent in the face of my myriad cultural obligations because, culturally, the tandhak’s role is ‘shaped as much by [her] social life as it is by her agency’ (after Berger 2009: 25). As yet unable to see myself as anything but a victim of my former social circumstances, I suggest semantically an undeniable causality by saying that when ‘I learned to sing’ I, therefore, had no choice but to ‘become a singing, dancing tandhak tayub’.

In what I came to see as the ‘fall out’ of the first recital, my efforts to untie the knots of my situation suggested two artistic choices: to follow the academic imperative to create works as ‘ethnologically correct’ as possible or, alternatively, to
reassess everything that I felt I knew about myself as a performer and attempt something different. For the purposes of the second recital, therefore, I chose the latter. I repositioned myself in relation to Javanese cultural forms and attempted to devise new, innovative works inspired by Javanese cultural artefacts. Certainly, the former approach, taken in In the Demon’s Circle, had capitalised on my ‘bi-musicality’ (Hood 1960). Producing such a work of cultural translation was, however, the equivalent of translating between languages: done skillfully, the translator is invisible. Making myself invisible denied my knowledge of the Javanese songs and dances that, like Baily (2008: 126), I performed, presented and produced ‘from the inside’.

Unlike Baily, however, who is himself an authoritative practitioner and recognised champion of Afghan music not only in Afghanistan but also in the Western world, whilst I had been gratified and fulfilled by my role as cultural interpreter and potent vessel of magic and mysticism throughout my time in Java, the prospect of reproducing such works in contexts outside of Indonesia was both unsatisfying and unappealing. The ambition to push – from my artistic perspective – the boundaries of these Javanese forms ‘operationally’ (Baily 2008: 126), meant adopting novel, syncretic tactics. Less ethnographic, the second recital, Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle, built upon Baily’s call to intermusability (Baily 2008: 126). Exploring Javanese performance art ‘operationally’ helped to clarify the cultural clash between what I once was and what I was now becoming. Audience members have suggested, in fact, that the second recital, Srimaya’s Fall, was not an example of bi-musical ‘translation’ nor was it a ‘multicultural’ work (Jane Davidson, pers. comm. 11 March 2013). Rather, the performance gave ‘outsiders the opportunity to watch [from] inside the Javanese culture’ (Sarah Weber pers. comm. 9 June 2013). Reflecting the incompatibility and dissonance between multiculturalism, my quest for authenticity and my artistic goals (all enduring facets of the demon’s
circle), such comments echo the imperative I felt to reposition myself vis-à-vis these performance texts.

In the second recital I chose to reflect, in five ‘poems’, the circularity that characterises Javanese mysticism. Exploring the development of my life experiences as a Javanese performing artist in this way resulted in ‘ritual prayer poetry’ that ‘flowed and intermingled beautifully’ with the ‘emotional and physical senses of the sights, sounds of music and feelings of living in Indonesia’ (Jody McCullough pers. comm. 4 March 2013). Whereas the ethnographic dialogue and description of In the Demon’s Circle had, I felt, lacked artistry, possibly even stripping the magic from the performance texts, Srimaya’s Fall interrogated, embraced and re-evaluated my multifaceted and diverse personal and performative past by using mystical symbolism as a foil.

The culturally rich portrayal of my embodied Javanese practice also mixed with media such as audio-visual recordings, live Javanese song and dance and English language sung verse. This resulted in a performance that, for many, was emotionally moving. Moreover, my decision to devise and perform English-language macapat verses served to break down cultural barriers; doing so also helped to re-contextualise the work. Aimed at facilitating audience members’ engagement with traditional Javanese performance modes, the lyricism of the macapat poetic sung verse forms transformed the ‘exclusivity’ of cultural performances traditionally presented ‘solely by native performers’ (Wendy Jones pers. comm. 8 March 2013). Mediating between the text and the audience, the gamelan music, songs and dances were presented both in their ‘original sociocultural context’ – through the medium of the video recordings – and in their ‘newly adopted milieu’ (after McIntosh 2005: 12) – the staged performance. Allowing for stylistically novel and experimental auto-ethnography, therefore, the ritual pageantry of the second recital staged my ‘life as a woman, the struggles, the pain’ (Jody McCullough pers. comm. 4 March 2013) and
offered an alternative perspective on my ‘self-in-process’ (Frith 1996: 109), particularly as a performing artist now working outside of Indonesia.

Theoretical Insights

In hindsight, the liminal, performance-as-ritual production of the first recital now feels static, uninteresting and inaccessible. Frustrated by my inability to ‘rise above’ or escape the hegemony of the song and dance performance texts included in the first recital, I then grappled with the various, tangled ‘worlds’ of my hermeneutical journey. Revisions to In the Demon’s Circle sought to improve the overall delivery of the material, but maintained the ‘authenticity’ of my spiritually powerful Javanese performing arts practices. Only the addition of auto-ethnographic dialogue and description reflected the ways in which my former Javanese home, career, community and professional and personal identity had not, actually, been ‘commensurable to [my] high hopes and expectations’ (Cohen, E. 1979: 195).

As in rituals, the events presented in the recital did ‘not occur at random, but at times of crisis and renewal’ (Turner 1967 cited in Emigh 1996: 1). The recital’s transformative and cathartic ceremonial presentations explored the mobility of my personal identity through my performance of traditional songs and dances in Perth. Bringing these performance artefacts into my present experience invested them with new meaning (after Berger 2009: 97). Having relocated to Australia, it no longer made sense for me to try to legitimise myself as a person and artist within a Javanese contextual paradigm. I accepted, finally, the burden and insurmountability of the ‘foreign performer’ codicil. This in turn allowed me to explore my practice as a ‘process not a thing, a becoming not a being’ (Frith 1996: 109). Contextually, I was bereft of the ‘cultural centre’ through which I had long created my identity (after Cohen, E. 1979). Not wishing to entirely repudiate the cultural role that I had once
held so dear, when I performed in Perth I also wanted to express the binaries of my entire life experience rather than maintaining a deceptively homogenous image that depicted only the person I had been since 1990.

Like other ‘existential tourists’ (Cohen, E. 1979), long before I ever lived and thrived in Java, I was influenced by North American life and the realities of the baby boomer generation. The process of moving into (and out of) my Javanese adoptive culture resulted in binaries such as outsider / insider; accomplished / inauthentic; at home / homeless; accepted / never belonging. Whilst the emotional loss of leaving Java – and the actual physical one as well – was at first crippling, making sense of the conflicting elements of my personality meant somehow portraying them on stage. In theatricalising this symbolic ritual transformation, the second recital capitalised on the ritualistic nature of the Javanese arts to produce a ‘post-industrial liminoid’ (Turner 1982) performance.71 Resembling ‘without being identical to liminal phenomena’ (Emigh 1996: 192), Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle explored the aforementioned binaries and in so doing, also resulted in the loss of some of my ‘fundamental and primordial relation’ (Ricoeur 1991: 34) to my former community of practice (after Lave and Wenger 1991). This process of ‘explanation and critical interpretation’ (Harnish 2001: 34) explored the trauma of leaving Indonesia as I began to reassess my ways of ‘being-in-the-world’ (Heidegger 1962).

The burgeoning distancing, or ‘productive distanciation’ (Rice 1994: 6) that I experienced towards the Javanese arts as a result of this process has been instructive. For instance, there are many reasons why I would never have made such work in Java. Most importantly, I had never considered myself an ‘artist’; being a ‘performer’ enabled me to earn a comfortable living and kept me busy enough that I existed in a veritable fog of exhaustion. Reformulating my personal identity to better

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71 The recital combined elements of theatrical styles such as masked dance, macapat sung poetry and dance dramas whilst also referencing the liminality of ritual purification ceremonies.
reflect the dichotomies inherent in my relationship to Java effectively substantiates the artistic choices I have made between ethnological authenticity or creative innovation. The choice between multicultural ‘object authenticity’ (Steiner and Reisinger 2006) and creative artistry need not be so clear-cut and unforgiving, however. Nonetheless, by actively choosing the path of intermusability (after Baily 2008) and eschewing the unattainable holy grail of ‘authenticity’, a suitable model for future work has emerged that suggests ways to further mould my practice.

Having resolved many of my private concerns about my artistic identity as a quasi ‘culture bearer’ (after Dunbar-Hall 2001) through the reflective work of this project, my embedded knowledge and embodied practice suggest myriad opportunities to create innovative performance work. Exploring the realities of my intermusability (Baily 2007) also offers fecund opportunities for the artistic expressions of my evolving self. By capitalising upon my unique position within the performing arts world, I anticipate that future revisions of *Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle*, for instance, will uncover further ‘techniques that best suit the needs’ of my audience (after McIntosh 2005: 24). Continued revision and expansion of the work also suggest opportunities to rectify and improve aspects of the performances that were not successful in the 2013 productions.

**Limitations of the Research**

As works-in-progress, certain changes or improvements to the creative components of the present study might have ensured better comprehension on the part of audience members unfamiliar with the Javanese cultural material. Some of the shortcomings of the works were due to the isolation in which I created them in Perth; others were due to my difficulties vis-à-vis explaining the highly personal nature of the research. I struggled to auto-ethnographically translate my longitudinal experiences as a music and dance practitioner. Various production aspects also
influenced the effectiveness of the recitals. These include the venue, the use of multi-
media audio-visual backing tracks and, most significantly, the on-going issue of
language as a mediator or intermediary of cultural knowledge. Fortunately, many of
the shortcomings of the first recital also suggested ways of improving the quality of
the second.

I felt initially that the recitals involved numerous concessions on my part. As
mentioned previously, for example, for many years I had only performed to live
music and considered it unprofessional and unsatisfying to perform to pre-recorded
music. In addition, creating professional quality musical accompaniment by
recording the songs and dances in Java meant losing the spontaneity that is very
much characteristic of East Javanese music and dance. For the purposes of the
recitals that were so integral to the research, however, I chose to perform in this way
and accepted that this was a necessary compromise. Nonetheless, the recorded tracks
were also limiting in other ways.

For example, upon revisiting the recordings as I prepared the recitals, I
discovered that some were of such poor quality that I could not use them. Whilst in
Java I had listened to the tracks, because of time restrictions, I had only been able to
re-record some particularly important pieces. At other times, and as my plans for the
recitals evolved, I was artistically restricted because I lacked appropriate recordings
to structurally facilitate any major changes. Because I also lacked a performance
community in Perth with sufficient abilities to participate in the research, such as, for
example, skilled gamelan musicians, there was no opportunity for collaborative
processes. I was, as a result, further constrained in how I could produce each recital.
The venue itself was an on-going concern. While the UWA Callaway Auditorium is
well suited to performances of Western art music, it was ill suited to In the Demon’s
Circle.
The auditorium’s built-in screen is intended exclusively for university lectures and did not support my use of audio-visual backing tracks as the sole means of musical accompaniment. Elevated several metres off the floor, it is too high above the performance space to give the illusion of the musicians sitting on a stage. Nor was it possible to successfully project the images against the dark, wood-panelled walls. In the end, I projected images of the recorded musicians onto a small stand-alone screen. The results were undeniably amateurish. This solution did not produce the desired illusion of being ‘inside’ the busy, smoke-filled atmosphere of traditional performance spaces in Java. Intending initially to further create such an illusion, I had also planned to provide a cabaret atmosphere with tables and chairs. I planned to serve Bintang Beer (*Bir Bintang*)\(^{72}\) to my audience alongside plates of boiled peanuts. I found it impossible to create this illusion, however, and one positive outcome of the recital was that I became strikingly aware of the realities of my present limitations.

No longer availed of a large staff I also had no access to inexpensive materials as I had been in Java. As I approached the second recital, therefore, I gave realistic thought to what I could accomplish on my own with no real budget. Aside from the lack of proficient gamelan musicians, as mentioned previously, I had not yet developed any network of musicians and performers in Perth. I also did not have the financial resources to facilitate any hired collaborations. Whilst I could not, therefore, fulfil my desire to involve live musicians in an innovative second recital, I was determined to at least find a more conducive venue and some community support. In the end, thanks to teaching Javanese dance in several arts high schools, I was able to recruit nine student associate performers and was invited to use the

\(^{72}\) Brewed locally, *Bintang Beer* is served at most *tayub* events. The company, *Bir Bintang*, is also a major sponsor of *tayub* events.
small, black box Tricycle Theatre at Mount Lawley Senior High School as the venue for the second recital.

Whilst the students who joined me as associate artists were enthusiastic and committed, they lacked experience and training. I also had to be realistic about my expectations for these performers because, working with me outside of their school curriculum, our rehearsal time together was limited to early morning sessions once per week for less than two months and additional sessions over the summer school holidays. The realities of the rehearsal schedule and working with children who were inexperienced with moving in a Javanese way also challenged me as a performer and teacher. I had no academic authority over the students and could not, therefore, push them beyond what they were willing to give emotionally and artistically. Because I was also one of the dancers, however, I experienced first hand the ways in which my concepts and choreographies worked and did not work in practice. Surprisingly instructive, the girls’ resistance forced me to be creative in my teaching methods. Their resistance was eventually mitigated because, in performing alongside them, they could see that I had as much at stake as they did. Rather than merely directing them, we were able to build a rapport as fellow artists.

Aiming to teach the students effectively, I tried as much as possible to use ‘clear and concise explanations and demonstrations’ (McIntosh 2005: 24) to instruct and shape the group. Solely responsible ‘for organising knowledge’ (Blacking 1987: 117, cited in McIntosh 2005: 24), I was keenly aware that the students needed to acquire dance skills quickly and learn effectively. I also had to overcome the challenges I felt in producing such auto-ethnographic material. Many cultural issues stood between my embodied practice and their own experiences. I knew, though, that if the students found the material too confusing, they would not be able to perform it effectively. By communicating ‘information regarding the wider sociocultural
background’ (McIntosh 2005: 24) of Javanese gamelan music, dance and theatre traditions to the students, they were eventually able to make sense of the theatrical world that I was proposing. Ultimately grasping the logic behind my theatrical imperatives, in the end the students were able to deliver their understanding in performance. Perhaps given more time and a more experienced group of performers and stage crew, *Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle* would have been of a different calibre. Nonetheless, the Mount Lawley senior high school students who performed with me deserve high praise for the levels to which they embodied the complicated and sophisticated movements, music and theatre.

**Issue of Language**

Probably the most significant limitation concerning the research, an issue that arose time and again, was that of language. Of particular importance was how to translate and stage Javanese performance texts effectively for my audiences. In the first recital, and as mentioned previously, I performed all of the recital lyrics entirely in Javanese while English ethnographic voice-overs and limited programme notes offered some explanation of the performance texts. Many in the audience found the recital too far removed from their own cultural experiences and were alienated by the inaccessibility of the language. The English-language poetic *macapat* performance texts I performed in the second recital were an attempt to overcome some of these issues. *Macapat’s* metrical and melodic structures, character and mood, as well as its associations with Javanese mysticism have influenced every contemporary and historical form of Javanese theatre. *Macapat* is undeniably an integral part of the performing arts throughout Java and extremely versatile. I believed that it fit holistically with the aims of my narrative and fully supported my production.
My interest in and use of macapat in both recitals was the topic of the lecture-demonstration that drew together many different factors of my research. Particularly compelling within Javanese performance spheres, I found translating, or ‘mediating’ (McIntosh 2005; Naughton 1996) these elements within Western contexts particularly challenging. The socio-cultural elements of this genre are intertwined with my own personal experiences of performing macapat for many years and under many conditions. This made it especially difficult to objectively explore macapat’s associations with deeply held mystical beliefs and cultural practices. The lecture-demonstration aimed to bring macapat further into my Western, academic, lived experience and that of my audience. In particular, this was an opportunity to reflect upon verses that I had written for Srimaya’s Fall based on Javanese texts. Comparing these verses, first in Javanese and then in English was, I felt, especially helpful. Exploring this particular aspect of my creative process made the results more transparent. Clearly the translator of these texts, I consciously aimed to also foreground myself as ‘the singer’. I did this because I believed that creating such a connection with my audience would help them to overcome the cultural obstacles of ‘the song’ (after Berger 2009: 107), i.e. the decontextualised cultural artefacts that I presented in performance. Such an approach was particularly important to the research because of the responses I had received from audience members concerning the continued inaccessibility of the performance.

Despite writing macapat verses in English, for example, many respondents remarked that it was still difficult to understand the texts due to their ‘tempo and phrasing’ (Steve Chinna, pers. Comm. 6 March 2013). The ‘long, drawn, lingering vowels’ and the ‘high-pitched singing’ made it a challenge to hear the ‘all-important consonant sounds’ (Peter Casserly, pers. Comm. 5 March 2013). This in turn “alienated” [the lyrics] from an easy (and lazy) comprehension” (Steve Chinna, pers.
Comm. 6 March 2013). Members of the audience also admitted to being distracted and aliened from the lyrics because of cultural elements such as my detached performance mien (Lucy Brennan, Louise Devenish, Monica Main, pers. comm. 1, 5, 28 March 2013 respectively). Whilst I had consciously chosen to create a tension between the refined constraint of the female dancers and the violence of the demons, audience members clearly required better cultural ‘signposting’ to make this juxtaposition effective.

**Programme Notes**

In both recitals, programme notes were intended to circumvent the ever-present issues associated with language. They were intended to provide detailed translations as well as explanations concerning aspects related to Javanese cultural practices. However, knowing what and how much information to provide was in itself problematic and raised more questions. For instance, it was unclear how much detail to include in the programmes and how to best present the information in an aesthetically pleasing way without compromising the performance atmosphere. Intended to aid comprehension and bridge the divide between ethnography, experimental theatre and multicultural performance, the programme notes offered members of the audience the opportunity to choose how much and how far they wished to engage with the live performance. For example, they could read all of the notes and explanations before the performance in order to understand my cultural approach to the staged artefacts, or they could choose to allow the performance to wash over them without knowing anything about the artist’s intentions. For the purpose of the second recital, a brief pre-performance talk, as sometimes occurs before classical concerts, was given by Assistant Professor Jonathan McIntosh. In this presentation, he provided a précis that outlined the storyline. Nonetheless, and
according to remarks provided in feedback by members of the audience, despite my efforts to provide selective information, the notes remained overwhelming.

Even though many audience members acknowledged that the programme notes allowed them to better appreciate the beauty of the poetry, they also admitted to losing their places in the narrative. In general, they found it difficult to keep the verses in mind whilst dividing their attention between the performance and the programme notes. Setting Javanese inspired English language poetic texts and rhyming structures to Western melodies (Jonathan McIntosh pers. comm. 26 March 2013), adopting the repetition of Western ballads (Lucy Brennan pers. comm. 5 March 2013) or providing projected surtitles in the way of an opera libretto were some suggested solutions to the language problem. Because important cultural information needs to be better incorporated into the overall performance event, these all suggest possible ways of overcoming this cultural difficulty in future performances.

Avenues for Future Research

Whilst I have seriously struggled with the self-reflective aspects of this research project, the results have been transformative. Progressing from mere mastery over the traditional styles of Javanese dance and music, the auto-ethnographic performances have enabled me to explore my personal life history and my changing ‘interpretation of the world’ (Harnish 2001: 24). Considering the ‘warring factions’ of the demon’s circle, as I have described them previously, whilst I may still balk at calling myself anything but an artisan (tukang) performer, the processes associated with devising the two recitals and the lecture-demonstration have shown how I have always underestimated my voice. Accepting that the performance ‘texts’ of my embodied practice are ‘autonomous’ with respect to their author and original ‘site-in-
life’ (Ricoeur 1991: 30), I may, therefore, choose how to present them in new, interesting, decontextualised (after Turner 1982: 52) and unconventional contexts. I am newly conscious of the unique position I hold within the performance world. The range of skills and experience that I bring to the table are in many ways unrivalled within the field; my job now is to capitalise upon and integrate all of the disparate elements of my embodied practice in creative and compelling ways.

Recognising, for example, the wealth of my portfolio skills suggests how they may be channeled into future creative endeavours. In addition to the important practical and teaching skills that I developed by negotiating with Mount Lawley staff and parents, I also taught the student performers to dance and perform in theatrically Javanese ways. Throughout the process of undertaking all of the creative aspects of producing the works from their initial planning, devising, writing and creating, costume design and production, video editing and lighting, I also marketed and promoted the two recitals. Most importantly, perhaps, I have developed critical reflective skills through which I may undertake on-going evaluations of the successes and failures of my performance pieces.

Like other liminoid, post-industrial artists (after Turner 1967, 1982), this doctoral project has freed me of the ‘social heritage’ of my adoptive culture and opened numerous avenues for further research. Only by continuing to deconstruct the artefacts that I once considered ‘sacrosanct’, and about which texts I have embodied ‘foreknowledge’ (Harnish 2001: 36), may I expect to produce compelling performance art. Continuing interrogations of these cultural forms must focus on further overcoming the shortcomings of the two recitals. I do not feel that I have done artistic justice to the subject of Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle. The auto-ethnographic nature of the work required an approach ‘centered on micro-details, making generalization difficult’ (Stone 2008: 171). I struggled to find the
necessory artistic universality that would make my audience care about my characters. The phenomenological nature of this research has also meant that it has been ‘very much the jeweler’s eye view as opposed to the bird’s-eye view of performance and life’ (Stone 2008: 171). Expanding now the lens to take in more than one woman’s experiences, future work suggests, for example, in-depth explorations of the various manifestations of the singer-dancer tradition as it is found throughout the archipelago. Or, possibly, this creative work may universalise the experiences of female performers all over the world. THE STORY NOT THE SITUATION.

By developing and integrating my practical and artistic portfolio skills as well as continuing the documentation of ‘a process rather than a slice of time’ (Wulff 2002: 122), I foresee building *The Demon’s Circle Project* into an expansive multidisciplinary work that incorporates all of my skills set. That is, singing, dancing, theatre, painting, costume design, multicultural understanding and creative digital media. In undertaking such future research, I hope to find a community of serious and similar minded intercultural musicians and dancers with whom active collaboration may build a creative, experimental arts community.

**Concluding Thoughts on Developing as an Intercultural Performing Artist**

The aim of this research project has been to critically evaluate my performing arts practice as part of my transition from Javanese singer-dancer to performing artist outside of Indonesia. Reflecting more than the reality that ‘stands behind’ the performance forms (after Chernoff 1979: 36, cited in Frith 1996: 111), the present research celebrates the existentially authentic reality ‘that is within’ Javanese cultural objects. These elements are in turn integral to my embodied practice and reflect my personal, creative and performative history (after Spiller 2009: 133). Constructing
the field of this research, I have ‘followed the metaphor’ (after Marcus 1998) of the ‘demon’s circle’. I have considered how it plagued me throughout my twenty years in Indonesia and how, ‘multi-local’ (Wulff 2002: 126), it came with me when I moved to Australia. From the troubled first recital’s attempt to provide background and retrospective material on my performance history in Java and my subsequent fall ‘from the demon’s circle’, the research project has raised the spectre of my ambivalent feelings about my apparent successes in Java.

The distinctive nature of this research has depicted the dichotomies inherent in my personal experience. Embracing creative work that recognises the ‘past manifestations’ of its historical origins as well as the ambivalences of my embodied practice has resulted in honest performances that are ‘always in the present, in the here-and-now’ (Bruner 1986: 11). The two recitals have called upon indigenous forms of traditional songs and dances, macapat sung poetry, ritual purification and Javanese traditional mystical principles to illuminate a chapter of my own life narrative, albeit with a new creative twist and slant. In so doing, the recitals have, as part of the ‘work-process of learning to understand’ (Mrázek 2005: 2), also opened the door to future investigation and exploration of my unique and colourfully troubled life within and now, having ‘fallen from’, the demon’s circle.

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73 According to Wulff (2002: 126), Marcus (1998) suggests ‘six strategies for multi-local fieldwork, or multisited ethnography: follow the people, follow the thing, the metaphor, follow the plot, story or allegory: the life or biography, or follow the conflict’.
### Glossary of Javanese Terms

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adi luhung</td>
<td>The noble or beautiful sublime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agustusan</td>
<td>Independence Day celebrations that run for a month</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alus</td>
<td>Refined</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anak kos</td>
<td>Boarder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andhegan</td>
<td>Vocal pauses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Angin</td>
<td>Wind</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artis</td>
<td>The term typically used specifically for performers of dangdut</td>
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<tr>
<td>Babok</td>
<td>A ‘basic’ or original macapat melody in contrast to a raised or embellished melody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balungan</td>
<td>Melodic line of a gendhing composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bambangan</td>
<td>Refined male style of dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barang miring</td>
<td>The technique of flattening certain tones to create a plaintive mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bawa</td>
<td>Macapat stanzas used as introductory interludes to popular songs and gendhing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beskalan</td>
<td>Malang-style tayub dance created by Muskayah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bintang tamu</td>
<td>Guest star performer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buko celuk</td>
<td>Short, unaccompanied vocal introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bumi-langit</td>
<td>Literally ‘earth-sky’, the dancer alternately raises her extended arms just above eye level and then lowers them to thigh height</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buto</td>
<td>Ogre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campursari</td>
<td>A popular musical style that combines gamelan, kroncong and Western instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cengkok</td>
<td>Ornamentation or embellishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cokekan</td>
<td><em>Gendhing</em> performed by a small ensemble comprised of soft instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangdut</td>
<td>A popular dance music that emerged in the late 1960s that combines local music traditions, Indian and Malaysian film musics, and Western rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demam pariwisata</td>
<td>Tourism fever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhalang</td>
<td>Puppeteer or narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhalang macapat</td>
<td>Narrator in the oral theatre <em>macapat</em> tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanyang</td>
<td>Village guardian spirits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodol tinuku</td>
<td>‘Buying and selling’ – a performance practice in which the singer/dancer and the drummer take turns leading the ensemble and cueing transitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dukun</td>
<td>Traditional Javanist shaman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eklas</td>
<td>Spiritual surrender or acceptance of the inevitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eling-eling</td>
<td>‘To Remember’, a sacred East Javanese gamelan composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empu</td>
<td>Spiritual elder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Nyindhen</td>
<td>‘Elizabeth Sings’: weekly television programme broadcast on the East Javanese regional TV station JTV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empuh karawitan</td>
<td>Expert in Javanese gamelan music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gagah(an)</td>
<td>Strong male style of dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambang</td>
<td>Wooden xylophone-like mallet struck instrument</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Gandhang**  
To sing to the East Javanese piece, *Jula-Juli*

**Gamelan**  
A collection of bronze gongs and forged metal slabs, drums, flutes and the *pesindhen* (female singer)

**Gandakusuma**  
‘Fragrant Flower’, a sacred East Javanese gamelan composition

**Gandrung Banyuwangi**  
The Banyuwangi Regency variant of *tayub*

**Gatra**  
A stanza line

**Gendhing**  
Classical gamelan compositions

**Gender**  
A metallophone with 10 to 14 tuned metal bars suspended over tuned resonators of bamboo or metal that are struck with two hand-held padded wooden discs

**Genjot**  
A raised wooden platform stage

**Gong ageng**  
The largest gong in which the soul of a gamelan ensemble is believed to reside

**Gotong royong**  
Working together

**Greget saut**  
A mood song usually sung by *dhalang* during moments of heightened tension

**Guru lagu**  
The ‘song guide’ for *macapat* verses

**Ilmu**  
Mystical knowledge

**Imbalan**  
A counter-point technique in which one *saron* alternates between two pitches two steps apart, playing on the beat. The second *saron* plays one step higher on the offbeats making a fast, flowing composite melody

**Irama**  
Tempo

**Jula-juli**  
An east Javanese piece with a 16-beat colotomic structure with gong strokes at the end of each 8 beat segment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kabupaten</td>
<td>Regency government subdivision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kampung</td>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karawitan</td>
<td>The playing of traditional Javanese gamelan music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasar</td>
<td>Rough or unrefined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kawi</td>
<td>Old and archaic Javanese based largely on Sanskrit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kebayak</td>
<td>A traditional long sleeved blouse worn by tandhak and pesindhen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keblat papat limo panjer</td>
<td>Javanese mystical principle that means ‘four directions, five in the centre’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kecamatan</td>
<td>Sub-regency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kain Panjang</td>
<td>A 3 metre-long batik ‘skirt’ fashioned by wrapping and securing the cloth at the waist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamajuan</td>
<td>Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kang</td>
<td>Honorific for ‘older brother’ and short for ‘kangmas’; also used as an intimate address for one’s husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenong:</td>
<td>One of the smaller gongs typically used to mark internal phrases within a larger gendhing structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kethoprak</td>
<td>Traditional Central Javanese music theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ki</td>
<td>An honorific used to refer to dhalang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kreasi baru</td>
<td>‘New’ dances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krincing</td>
<td>The sound made by the bells fastened around a dancers’ ankle, typically used in East Java dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kroncong</td>
<td>A musical style that combines gamelan, late nineteenth-century Portuguese music and Western instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krucilan</td>
<td>Compositional structures that feature dense gong cycles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and fast, interlocking *saron* parts

*Kuno*  
Old fashioned

*Lagu*  
A song

*Lampah*  
A syllable

*Langgam*  
A short song, usually in an AABA form

*Layang*  
Epic *macapat* poems

*Lengger Banyumas*  
The *tandhak tayub* variant from Banyumas, north-west Java

*Lingkaran setan*  
Demon’s circle

*Ludruk*  
Transvestite theatre

*Mbah*  
Grandfather

*Macapat*  
Javanese epic poetry tradition

*Mak*  
Colloquial name for ‘mother’

*Mbak*  
Honorific that literally means ‘older sister’ but is used as a term of address between friends and acquaintances

*Mendhak*  
A deep plié used in Javanese dance

*Modernisasi*  
Modernisation

*Murwokolo*  
The story of the ogre demon, Bethoro Kolo

*Naga*  
Serpent

*Ndeso*  
Country, countrified

*Ngampat*  
A musical term meaning ‘to speed up’

*Ngidung*  
A singing style unique to the east Javanese *Jula-Juli.*

*Ngisi*  
To ‘fill’ with spiritual potential

*Ngremo*  
Unique east Javanese introductory dance performed to *Jula-Juli*

*Ngremo tembel*  
*Ngremo* ‘with tips’ used in *tayub* performances
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ning</td>
<td>Internalised pure concentration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pak</td>
<td>Abbreviation of Bapak, literal meaning ‘father’; used as an honorific for older and respected men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parikan</td>
<td>East Javanese ABAB rhyming couplets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathet</td>
<td>Musical mode in gamelan music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedhalangan</td>
<td>Repertoire of the dhalang or shadow puppeteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesindhen</td>
<td>Singer in the Javanese gamelan orchestral tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelog</td>
<td>One of the gamelan orchestra’s two tuning systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelik</td>
<td>A ‘raised’ version of a melody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pendopo</td>
<td>Pavilion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penghayatan</td>
<td>Musical feeling and nuance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perkembangan</td>
<td>A flowering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pirang</td>
<td>Copper-coloured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prapen</td>
<td>Brazier filled with coals for burning incense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pusaka</td>
<td>Heirlooms such as sacred knives (keris), masks and gamelan ensembles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putri</td>
<td>Lit. ‘woman’; a refined female style of dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parikan</td>
<td>A four-line set of two rhyming couplets (ABAB), each between 8-10 syllables per line unique to East Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rasa</td>
<td>Embodied inner feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rasa sejati</td>
<td>Absolute truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reyog</td>
<td>Unique masked dance drama from Ponorogo, East Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruwatan</td>
<td>Ritual purification ceremony also called the ‘murwokolo’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampur</td>
<td>Long dance scarf (approx. 1.5m) worn around the neck or tied at the waist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javanese Word</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sekar jagat</td>
<td>A batik pattern that means ‘flower of the world’ and is considered spiritually and symbolically powerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sembah</td>
<td>A gesture of respect in which the hands are placed palms together in front of the dancer’s face as she kneels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sendhon</td>
<td>Denotes songs sung by a dhalang during performances of shadow puppetry or mask dance drama to provide narrative content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senggakan</td>
<td>Duet-like ‘interjections’ sung by the male musicians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sindhen gendhing</td>
<td>An accomplished singer confident in advanced and structurally complicated gendhing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sindhenan</td>
<td>Javanese song and gendhing repertoire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singget</td>
<td>A transition movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinom</td>
<td>A popular macapat verse form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siter</td>
<td>Zither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slendro</td>
<td>One of the gamelan orchestra’s two tuning systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Srimpi Limo</td>
<td>The spiritually potent ‘Five Srimpi’ dance created by Muskayah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Srisig</td>
<td>A stylistic quick walk used in Javanese dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tandhak tayub:</td>
<td>Traditionally itinerant singer-dancer, now drinking party dancers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarob</td>
<td>A festive roof made by hanging colourful tarps from a metal frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tayub(an) or tandhakan</td>
<td>The social drinking party dance tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tembang</td>
<td>Verse forms that derive from the macapat tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tukang</td>
<td>Artisan or, pejoratively, ‘hack’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wangsalan</strong></td>
<td>Central Javanese rhyming couplet of twelve lines each with a $4 + 8$ internal structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Warna suara</strong></td>
<td>Vocal character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Watak</strong></td>
<td>Mood or character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wayang kulit</strong></td>
<td>Shadow puppetry theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wirasa</strong></td>
<td>Embodied ‘feeling’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wiraga</strong></td>
<td>Embodied movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wirama</strong></td>
<td>Heightened attention to live performance drum cues and tempo changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wong</strong></td>
<td>A person, specifically a member of the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wong blater</strong></td>
<td>Men who participate in the <em>tayub</em> community and its activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References Cited


Appendix A:

Djupri, Pedhalangan 3 November 1991 (Munardi 1996: 42, translation by author)

This is what is called Srimpi Limo

What does Srimpi Limo mean

Sri or sari is the essence of the natural world

Pi from sinipi means ‘the shape’

Therefore srimpi is the shape of the world's essence

This is nothing other than mankind

Mankind has four ‘siblings’ who reside

In the north, east, south, west

Therefore together these are known as

‘four siblings, five in the centre’

I

Lima niku sedulur papat lima pancer

Five is ‘four siblings, five in the centre’

Sedulur kang ana wetan putih rupane

The sister to the east is white

apa manukane, kuntul

The bird is a stork

apa kadadeyane, getih putih

Deriving from ‘white’ blood

apa kuwasane, teguh rahayu wulujeng

With the power to bring good fortune

II

Sedulur kang ana kulon abang rupane

The sister to the west is red

apa manukane, manuk dhandhang

The bird is a carrion crow

apa. ka.dadeyane, getih abang

Deriving from ‘red’ blood

apa kuwasane, ngreksa rina kalawan wengi

Her power

takes care all night and day

III

Sedulur kang ana kidul ireng rupane

The sister to the south is black

apa manukane, manuk gagak

The bird is a raven

apa kadadeyane, getih dhadhu

Deriving from ‘purple’ blood

apa kuwasane, nulak sakehing bilahi kabe

With the power to deflect danger

IV

Sedulur kang ana lor kuning rupane

The sister to the north is yellow

apa. manukane, kepodhang

The bird is a golden oriole

apa kadadeyane, getih sungsum

Deriving from bone marrow blood

apa kuwasane, nylametna tindak saka laku

With the power to keep all actions from evil

ala

V

Sedulur kang ana tengah jenenging manungsα

The sister in the middle is called the self

jenengingroh ilapi (baca: idlafi, pen.)
The self and the soul

ya jabang bayine si [Paidi]
The soul of [the name of the patient]

biru rupane, pinayungan Kanjeng Nabi

Blue in colour, protected by the prophet

Lan rineksa dening sedulure papat kalima

And by the four sisters with the fifth in

pancer

the centre
Appendix B:
Annotated Programme Notes:

In the Demon’s Circle: Love, Lyrics and Lotus Flowers

Programme Cover

In the Demon’s Circle:
Love, Lyrics and Lotus Flowers

Karen Elizabeth Schrieber

Doctor of Musical Arts Recital

7.30pm Saturday 21 April
The Callaway Music Auditorium
School of Music
The University of Western Australia

In the Javanese language, the phrase ‘demon’s circle’ (*linkaran setan*) is like a Catch 22: inescapable, irrevocable, forever caught in the ‘betwixt and the between’ – damned if you do and damned if you don’t.

In 1990, whilst a postgraduate anthropology student, I travelled to the city of Malang, East Java, Indonesia, to attend an in-country language program. During this time, I became fascinated with the Javanese performing arts, so much so, that I chose to remain in Java for the next twenty years. During this period (1990-2010), I lived in the village of Tumpang where I married a Javanese puppet master (*dhalang*) and gave birth to two daughters. In addition, and as a result of studying with eminent East Javanese performers, I developed a reputation as a dancer and singer of traditional Javanese music (*pesindhen*) of national repute: I regularly appeared as a ‘guest star’ with respected musicians; I performed for two Indonesian presidents; and, I presented my own television show. In 2010, however, and following the breakdown of my

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74 Artwork created by the author.
marriage, my daughters and I decided to leave Java. After settling in Perth, Western Australia, and in order to re-establish my artistic self in a ‘western’ context, I enrolled in the Doctor of Music Arts (DMA) degree at The University of Western Australia.

This evening’s recital is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the DMA. The recital charts my development as a performer of the Javanese traditional arts over the twenty-year period I lived in East Java. For example, I first learned the masked dance, *Bapang*. Subsequently, I learned more challenging dances, including *Remo*, the most popular dance genre in East Java. I also developed an enduring passion for the unique challenges of the female performers who must be equally accomplished dancers and singers (*tandhak tayub*). Due to the geographic location of this evening’s event, it is not possible to perform with live musical accompaniment, however. Instead, the music and video used for the recital was recorded in December 2011 in Tumpang, Malang, East Java. I extend my thanks to the musicians, as my associate performers, for their participation.

**ACT I**

**Prologue, Overture Sepuluh**

Gamelan music is integral to traditional Javanese society. Performed by an ensemble comprising bronze gongs, metallophones, drums, flutes and a female singer (*pesindhen*), this music is iconic of the emblematic soundscapes of Javanese life and culture. East Javanese legend recounts that gamelan music magically controls malevolent spirits (demons). It is for this reason that *Mbah Supatman*, one my first singing teachers, always performed certain stanzas of sung poetry (*macapat*) before every performance. The sung poetry in *Overture Sepuluh* recounts how the magic of song is necessary to contain mischievous spiritual beings. To this end, incense is burned and presented as an offering to the spirits. Incense is also burned prior to a masked dance performance, but on such occasions the smoke is used to invite appropriate spirits ‘into’ the mask as a means of bringing the performance to life.

*The recital opens on a well-lit, largely empty, unpeopled stage in the UWA Callaway music auditorium. A screen stands upstage-right, a gong and stand are placed up-centre with a mike stand upstage-left. On-screen, the video recording shows the musicians in their performance outfits. The gambang and gender feature prominently during the first section of the opening gendhing in the ‘10’ mode (Sepuluh)."*

**Pre-recorded voice over:**

1990. Malang, East Java. Indonesia. As we climb from the minibus, and up the uneven concrete steps, I hear it: the sound of dancing bells from behind the stage and the susurrus of the flocking children, indistinct over the [dull] throb of activity. Crowds of villagers watch us from across the street. They edge closer, pushing against the sides of the makeshift, bamboo stage, watching us as we watch them. A child wails, the *kukuriku* of a rooster crow, the sound of someone pounding wood in the distance. A gamelan orchestra is already playing: wooden mallets pounding over metal keys creates a harmonious cacophony; the resonance of a sudden gong stroke.

*At the words ‘gong stroke’, the music speeds up to feature the East Javanese krucilan playing style that is characterised by dense gong cycles and fast, interlocking saron parts. I enter wearing the red velvet, gold beaded Bapang costume: two aprons (rapek)*

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75 I include the stage directions here to assist the reader in visualizing the performance as it was presented in 2012. Such directions were not included in the actual programme notes.
in front and back, belt (sabuk), wrist guards (pols deker), filigreed painted leather upper arm decorations (klat bahu), bronze bells sewn to a leather strip tied on my right ankle and dance scarf over one shoulder tied on the opposite side. In anticipation of the following remo dance, I wear a red velvet beaded bodice piece (mekek) instead of the red velvet sleeveless shirt typically worn by female performers for male-style dances (men go shirtless) and a black wig. During the voice-over I kneel next to the mike stand.

Pre-recorded voice over:
The dhalang – that is, the puppeteer – waves over one of the little girls and, leaning close, whispers in her ear. She then weaves through the crowd, quickly returning with a pack of cigarettes and a glass of coffee perched precariously on a chipped, flowered saucer. Behind her, a man balances a pile of smouldering coals on a broken roofing tile. Squatting, he places it gently before the dhalang as the gamelan music rises and falls.

Surrounded by offerings of flowers, rice and betel nut, the dhalang breaks rock incense into small pieces before carefully inserting them between the luminous coals on the broken tile. The cool wind envelops me in great clouds of fragrant smoke. As I settle into the rented white plastic chair underneath the southern stars, the dancers’ bells grow louder. They cross behind the stage: a king, a maiden, an ogre, a hero – even a bumbling, long-nosed fool. The dhalang holds each mask over the incense smoke. With his eyes pressed tightly shut, he mutters invocations to the spirits and demons of Mount Bromo – the volcano whose trailing of smoke obscures the distant hills. Then, the dhalang raps an abrupt dedok-dok-dok that sounds loud above the clanging of the wooden mallets and the winding trills of the female vocalist, and the show begins.

The voice over ends as the accompaniment resounds with a final gong stroke. The music moves into the accompaniment to sung verse form (macapat) dandanggula.

Dandanggula Jala Tidha

Ono kidung rumeksa ing wengi
Teguh ayu luputo ing loro

Luputo bilahi kabeh
Jim setan datan purun
Paneluhan tan ono wani
Miwah pengggawe olo
Gunane wong luput
Geni atemah tirta
Maling adoh tanono ngarah mring
mami
Guno tujuh pan sirno

II
Sekeh loro pan samya bali
Sekeh omo pan sami mirudo
Welas asih pandulune
Sekehing brojo luput
Kadyo kapuk tibo neng wesi
Sekehe wiso towu

Translation (Arps 1994: 54-55)

A song exists guarding at night
steadfast, unharmed, be free from sickness
be free from all disaster
spirits and devils are reluctant
no sorcery dares
and evil witchcraft
others’ enchantment fails
fire ends up as water
thieves keep away, no one takes aim at me
for enchantment and magic vanish

For all sickness turns back
for all pests take flight
looking with compassion and affection
all weapons miss their mark
like cotton is the impact of iron
all venoms are harmless
At the end of the two dandanggula, the music moves into a repeated high tone on the smallest saron (peking) as I sing the following opening Asmorodono. I light stick incense and push it into a glass cup filled with rice where it stands upright and burns, emitting a thin trail of smoke. I hold the Bapang mask and then the headdress (jamang) over the incense smoke.

_Bapang Masked Dance_

Often taught to novice dancers, the _Bapang_ masked dance was the first dance that I learned. Indeed, the genre is a particular favourite in the city of Malang, East Java, near to where I lived, studied and worked. The character of _Bapang_, although outwardly villainous, is considered to be so foolish and irreverent that he remains a popular favourite. The red mask depicts strong emotion and the movement style reflects the character’s uncontrolled nature. My daughter, Sonya Condro Lukitosari, is the drummer in the video recording for this dance.

Pre-recorded voice over:
Definition of a _tandhak_ tayub: Hefner asserts that _tandhak_ – translation, drinking party dancers – belong to the spiritual, magical and sacred realms. It’s the whole ‘Madonna’ thing, but in a Muslim, tropical context: saviour-whore, mother-daughter, vessel-vehicle; magical mystical creatures who invoke rain to fill a dried up stream, or stop the rice from rotting. The bottom line is, these women dance with the gods. They wear perfume to please them; insert fine gold nails under their flesh – they say it gives them
power – purchase charms and talisman from aging shaman to ward off black magic
and purchase their own black magic santet to make their friends lose their voices,
forget their lyrics, look old and sink, finally, into obscurity.

I didn’t set out to become a tandhak tayub, just one thing led inexorably into the next. After
that first magical masked dance performance, I chose to stay in Java forever. I was in love
with the masks and I thought that I loved the dhalang. I spent my first few months in Java with
the masked dance troupe – but people started to demand that I show my face when I danced. So I learned the remo – the ever-popular male warrior dance performed by cross-dressing women. I learned the traditional, cassette version first, and I didn’t sing. But the thing about remo is that it forces you to make a choice: you are either just a dancer pretending to be a man or you are a tandhak tayub performing as a woman dressed as a man who is Clearly a Woman. I learned to sing and therefore, I became a singing, dancing tandhak tayub. For five long years I danced with men for money – day after day and night after night. To truly become a successful singer-dancer tandhak, though, I had to learn all the most popular songs. Jineman Uler Kambang is one of my favourites!

Jineman Uler Kambang

An extensive repertoire is required of every aspiring singer of traditional gamelan music (pesindhen) and singer/dancer (tandhak tayub). This includes musical compositions (gendhing) of varying degrees of difficulty, distinctive song styles, such as langgam and jineman, and dance pieces favoured in social dancing contexts (tayub). Here I perform one of the most popular song styles, jineman, a genre of gamelan composition in which the pesindhen part is featured. Uler Kambang is a jineman in which the vocal line soars above the musical accompaniment like a caterpillar floating (ngambang) on water.

At the conclusion of the video and voice over, I return to the stage dressed in the Remo costume. I have removed the mask and headdress, the two aprons, the wrist guards (pols deker), the upper arm decorations and Bapang dance scarf. I now wear a red velvet beaded bolero over the bodice piece (mekek) along with a long wide belt on my waist and hanging, beaded velvet squares. I wear bronze ankle bells again and a dance scarf that now hangs from my left hip. I have drawn on a black moustache and a folded hat (blangkon) perches on top of my short black wig. I remove the mike from its stand and, posed stiffly, sing the following Jineman Uler Kambang:

Jineman Uler Kambang (in Javanese)

Jarweng janmo
Janmo kang koncatan jiwo
Sayuk-sayuk,
Sayuk sedyamu didadekno
Ojo lali loh mas kowo,
Gothong royong, nyambut gawe
Sariratri kudu eling lan waspodo

Kinclong-kinclong, kinclong guwayane
Mubyar murup
Mencorong katon tejane

Translation for Short Composition
‘Floating Caterpillar’ (by the author)

The incarnation of man
Man who has lost his soul
One heart, one soul
Make yourself ready to become one heart
Don’t forget, mas, you
Must strive together and work
In the dark of night, remember and be cautious
Bright and shining, colourful radiance
Shining brightly
The light beams shine

76 Mas or kangmas is an honorific that literally means ‘older brother’ but is also typically used as an intimate way of addressing husbands or boyfriends.
Gones, ora butuh kae-kae, Gones, I don’t need that, 
ora butuh kae-kae I don’t need that
Butuhku mung sengeng wae. I just need to be happy
Ora butuh omah loji, I don’t need a brick house
Butuhku mung seneng ngati. I just need to enjoy myself
Ora patut dituruti, It is not right to follow
Tindhak kang nyenyomati, Behaviour that is just for fun
Mula kuwi, mula kuwi, Therefore, therefore
Maneman eman eman. Maneman eman eman

Ooooooooo
Male chorus vocable
Sekar pisang, The banana plant flower
Pisang sesajining karya The pinnacle of an undertaking
Brambang saksen telu Shallots three for one cent
Berjuang dimen bersatu Fighting for togetherness
Brambang, saksen limo, Shallots five for one cent
Berjuang dimen merdiko, gones, Fighting for independence, gones
Tuku tumbar cumak telu, Buy only three coriander seeds
Tuku tumbar cumak telu, Buy only three coriander seeds
Janji sabar lan bersatu, Promise to be patient and all for one
Tuku tumbar cumak limo, Buy only five coriander seeds
Janji sabar lan narimo. Promise to be patient and accept your fate

The jineman ends and the accompaniment cues the start of ngremo. I return the mike to its stand and begin the dance.

Remo Tembel
An introductory dance, Remo traditionally depicts a male warrior. There are many different versions of Remo, each of which is defined by various stylistic elements as well as regional flavours. The most popular form, Remo Tembel, features female dancers who portray male characters in performance. Remo Tembel is most often performed in social dancing contexts (tayub). Within such contexts, not only do female singer/dancers fulfil a social and ritualistic function but they also provide entertainment to (mostly) men who tend to imbibe considerable amounts at such events. The tayub version of the dance performed here includes a short ‘welcome to the show’ song, following which guests would be invited onto the stage to perform an improvised duet with the female singer/dancer. In a live tayub event, this ‘tembel’ section could last for two hours. Today artist and guests will dance to the composition Sinom Parijotho.

In the middle of the dance the music shifts into slow accompanied that indicates the first singing section. I therefore retrieve the mike and, standing in the ‘correct’ ngidung position (legs apart and the mike held stiffly), I sing:

**Tembang Pambuko (in Javanese)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sugeng pambagyo</th>
<th>Most welcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dumateng poro rawoh sedoyo</td>
<td>To all of our guests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monggo pinarak ingkang sekeco</td>
<td>Please sit in comfort</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

77 *Gones* literally means ‘graceful’ but is used here as a melodic filler word (*isen-isen*). Other *isen-isen* include: *mas* (older brother), *bapak* (father), *romo* (father), *raden* (prince), *man-eman* (it is too bad) and *lo-le-lo* (no translation available – melodic filler). These are used throughout the *sindhen* repertoire.
Amriksani kesenian kula
Uji pentas ing dalu menika
Langkung prayogi amaringono
Kritik soho pemanggih inkang prasojo
Sampun dados watak lan coro
Menawi lepat nyuwun sepuro

To watch my performance
This evening’s performance exam
It is better to give
Unembellished criticisms and advice
This is usual character and the way to do it
If I make mistakes please forgive me

The music speeds up to indicate the final portion of Sinom that typically ends this singing section.

**Final Sinom (in Javanese)**
Golar galir wong keneng guna,
Wong batik sinambi nangis,
Malam watuh belabaran,
Geni murup den unduri

**Translation (by the author)**
Going in circles, magicked
Making batik in tears
The whole night long
The live flame grows smaller

As the first singing section ends, the music moves back into the quick tempo accompaniment for the second dance section. The music slows again for a second singing section: I sing: ‘back and forth to find food and clothes’ (wira-wiri nggoleki sandhang lan pangan) then on-screen Pak Supat sings ‘most honoured male and female guests please find a comfortable seat’ (poro pamiarso kakung putri pinarak ingkang sekeco). Pak Supat continues speaking: ‘All guests, I now interrupt this ngremo dance in order to give the honourable dance scarf to table number 25; please play the gendhing Sinom, cak’

78 Warno’ (Poro rawuh kula ngganggu dalane remo kanggo mariingi sampur panghormatan dumateng mejo nomer selikur, kula nyuwun gendhing Sinom cak Warno). A translation is provided on screen. Condro Lukitosari (CL) hands Jonathan McIntosh (JM) a dance scarf and puts one on herself. The tayub dance section follows – the two of them facing me on the right side of the stage. I push the mike down into my bustier to leave my hands free – this a common practice in Java especially when performing solo. The drumming for Sinom is in the Tulung Agung style (Tulungagungan). I sing:

**Sinom (in Javanese)**
Nulada laku utomo
Tumrape wong tanah jawi
Wong agung ing ngeksi gondho

**Sinom Translation (Kartomi 1973: 221)**
An exemplary character, a model
For the people of the land of Java
Is the great man of Mataram (called)

CL and JM cross towards me whilst I dance between them.

Panembahan seno pati
When we meet at the centre of the stage, I turn upstage to face JM.

Kepati amarsudi
Study with concentration

We turn away from each other and continue until JM and CL are on the opposite side of where they started and at the end of the song I stand in their original position.

Sudanen howo lan nepsu
Always try to reduce lust and desire

78 Cak is an East Javanese variant of ‘mas’ (older brother).
79 The great mans name is Panembahan Senopati.
We again face each other, but on opposite sides of the stage. The drumming and the gendhing change to a melody in a faster style. During this dancing section, we again traverse the stage so that JM and CL pass me and return to their initial starting positions. JM and CL leave the stage. I perform the final section of the Ngremo dance before I bow and exit the stage for intermission.

*Intermission: the on-screen musicians play gendhing in the Malang style (Gendhing Malangan) for 15 minutes whilst I change off stage.*

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**ACT II**

**Music: Gendhing Malangan (Malang style)**

*Lengger Banyumas and Tayub Malangan (Malang-style Tayub)*

*Tayub* events, which take place during the afternoon and evening, traditionally begin with an introductory dance. In East Java this is always Remo. In other parts of Java the introductory dance is usually in a female style. The tradition of female performers who are equally adept at singing and dancing (*tandhak tayub*) is widespread throughout Java. Because of my interest in this genre, I took the opportunity to study many of these variations, including *Lengger Banyumas*, a regional version of this phenomenon from central West Java.

*Over a static picture on the screen a pre-recorded voice-over provides a description of my first journey into the mountains to perform tayuban.*

**Pre-recorded voice over:**

My first *tayub* gig was in the highlands of Mount Bromo, close to where we lived. Packed into a minivan with our costume bags and our dressers, there were 10 of us *tandhak* hired to perform for two nights and a day. It took four hours to reach the village hall, the midday temperature dropping with each hairpin turn, our teeth rattling, as we rumbled up the gutted road towards the loudspeaker whose distorted Indo-pop reached us on the wind.

After arriving at the village hall, we were ushered importantly through groups of drunken men to take our make up stations in the cavernous village head’s office. Some of the women, arrived there before us, were already made up, their flowered dressing frocks half unbuttoned, revealing [glimpses of] flesh restrained by elastic strapless bras and thick gold pendants on thick gold chains. Their *kroncong* bracelets jangled as they carefully teased their hair into smooth, high halos. *Tayub* sessions are divided into two sections: the first the male-style *remo* and the second the female-style *tayub*. I usually did the *Remo* with a few others. When we finished, the women dressed for *tayub* in their long-sleeved *kebayak* blouses and batik skirts took the stage for an introductory *tayub* dance. Then they sat at each drunken table in turn. We joined them once we wiped off our black moustaches, removed our beaded velvet costumes, put up our hair and changed into our own *kebayak* and skirts.
We poured drinks of beer and homebrewed whisky and took turns singing to the men. They pushed money (and invitations) into our satin sheaths, their ragged nails nicking our powdered skin. Some of the women didn’t mind – sometimes it led to one thing or another, but usually just to a dance together on the makeshift wooden platform stage. And the night wore on as we moved from table to table.

I stand upstage right, leaning against the wall in a beaded blue kebayak. At the end of the voiceover, the video flicks to the jula-juli music typically used to introduce tayub events. Pak Supat sings ‘Good evening most respected guests; please watch our presentation of the famous tayub’ (sugeng dalu poro rawoh ingkang minulya; amriksani kesenian kula seni tayub ingkang nomo). Pak Supat says [English translation is provided on screen] ‘Good evening all you guests, this evening we will be having a performance of the tayub arts led by ning Elizabeth or ning Karen. This evening I’ll ask you to play the music for Lengger Cak Kus’ (Sugeng dalu poro rawuh dalu menika ngawontenaken kesenian tayub ingkang dipun pandegani dening ning Elizabeth soho ning Karen; ing dalu meniko nyuwun dipuniringi Lengger Cak Kus). I move downstage and begin the first Lengger dance section. The music comes to a tumultuous pause. I sing the opening phrase in Banyumas (the language of the West Java region of Banyumas).81

Du dandu kawulane kawulane

On the recording the musicians explode in ‘hey hey hey’ and ‘lo lo lo’ while I run a quick, small circle. Then I sing again in Banyumas:

Sekare gadhung gadhunge semayar-mayar

The musicians begin to play at the end of the previous phrase for the following accompanied singing section:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Musicians</th>
<th>Duwalolo lololo lo-o-eng</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lengger</td>
<td>Ma-rama inyong neng kene melu sapa rama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musicians</td>
<td>a-o-e-ya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lengger</td>
<td>Dongkel gelang dening ebung alang-alang -- bung alang alang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musicians</td>
<td>Duwalolo lololo lo-o-eng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lengger</td>
<td>Ma rama wis ajekhe wis ajekhe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musicians</td>
<td>Sami mawon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lengger</td>
<td>Wis ajekhe wong lanang gedhe goroho gedhe goroho gedhe goroho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musicians</td>
<td>Duwalolo lololo lo-o-eng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lengger</td>
<td>Ma rama wakul kayu wakul kayu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musicians</td>
<td>Sami mawon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lengger</td>
<td>Wakul kayu cepone wadah pengaron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musicians</td>
<td>Duwalolo lololo lo-o-eng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lengger</td>
<td>Ma rama kapanane kapanane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musicians</td>
<td>Duwalolo lololo lo-o-eng</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

80 Ning is an East Javanese variant of the honorific, mbak (older sister).
81 Singers often perform texts that they do not understand. In this case, the Banyumas Lengger, Endang, taught me these texts and did not provide translations at the time. I have been unsuccessful in finding any scholarly or other sources for assistance with translating these texts and I have been forced, therefore, to leave them untranslated.
I run a quick, small circle before singing the final line then start the dance portion of this tayub variant.

Sekare gadhung gadhunge semayar-mayar

I return the mike back to the stand and commence the dance portion of this composition.

Following Lengger Banyumas, a brief clip shows me in a campursari ‘video cd’ recording of the short composition Kembang Kopi, part of my performance oeuvre. I say ‘some of the television performances were like this [indicating the screen], but I tended to prefer the more classical, like this [on-screen, the gender plays the opening notes for a verse of asmaradana that is used as an introduction (bowo) to the popular song ‘Broken Hearted’ (Dadi Ati)].

Asmaradana and Langgam Dadi Ati

My career as a performer in Java was not easy. I was often on the road for days on end, arriving home for just long enough to air my costumes and sleep for an hour or two before heading out once more to perform. As time went on, I had more opportunities to appear on televised music programs. I became known for my performances of songs like Langgam Dadi Ati – a song about unrequited love.

Following these successful performances on Indonesian state television, however, I was invited to host my own television show, ‘Elizabeth Sings’ (Elizabeth Nyindhen). Broadcast from 2005-2006, on the Surabaya regional TV station, JTV, this show aimed to promote traditional Javanese music all the while requiring me to speak in the Javanese language. Because of the nature of the show, I performed both classical East Javanese music, but also presented many challenging pieces from the Central Javanese repertoire. Ladrang Pangkur is a popular central Javanese piece and one that I always enjoyed performing.

I sing a verse of asmaradana as introduction (bowo) to the popular song ‘Broken Hearted’ (Dadi Ati).

Asmorondono

Gegarane wong akrami
Dudu bondo dudu rupa
Amung ati pawitane
Luput pisan kena pisan
Yen gampang luwih gampang

Translation (by the author)

The reason people marry
Is not for wealth, not for looks
It starts with the heart
You can make one mistake
It is good when it is easy
Yen angel angel kelangkung
Tan keno tinumbas arta

It is too hard when it is work
But it is priceless

I then perform ‘Broken Hearted’ in the TV campursari style: standing whilst singing and dancing in a refined, Central Javanese style. The video clip shows a close-up of the gender player. The sound of the afternoon call to prayer (adan) ends the recording.

**Dadi Ati**

Nggoleka sing kaya ngapa
Wong nyatane kelakon seprene
Angger angger gendra
Wekasane malah mbangun tresna

Dudu bonda dudu rupa
Mung ati dadi tetaline
Guyub rukun kadya
Pepindhane mimi lan mintuna

Wis jamak lumrahe
Yen wong urip coba lan godhane
gedhe
Suprandene,
ora nganti ndadak dadi gawe

Rina wengi dadi ati
Wong prasaja luhur bebudene
Dhasar thik gemati
Momong putra alus bebudene

Broken Hearted (Translation by the author)

Look for the one who is like something
Turns out the fates go this far
My dear little girl
Your kindness makes me love you

It is not money, it is not appearance
Only the heart ties us together
We get along like
Like two horseshoe crabs never parted

It is just natural
Life is full of challenges and temptations
Even so,
it will never upset us

Night and day I think of you
Your thoughtfulness is eternal
Patient and caring
Gently caring for your child

At the end of the song I say, ‘And then I got more television shows which are all about Javanese music, their promotion and presentation’. I kneel upstage right next to the mike as I return it to the stand, perched on a black velvet pesindhen stool (dingklik).

**Klenengan Ladrang Pangkur to Ayak 9**

While much Javanese gamelan music is oriented towards providing musical accompaniment to dance or theatre, *klenengan* – denoting performances of gamelan music without dance or theatre – is traditionally performed before all-night performances, or at receptions for weddings or circumcisions. *Ladrang Pangkur* is a popular composition that resolves seamlessly into *Ayak 9*, part of the traditional Central Javanese repertoire used to close tonight’s recital.

The musicians begin the Ladrang Pangkur musical composition. In the faster first section (iromo I), the musicians sing together in a chorus (koor) style while I sing the same lyrics in a sindhen style.

**Salisir**

A poetic verse composed of four lines.

My thanks to Bapak I. Harjito for his explanation of the poetic salisir text and its internal play on words. Literally, *gerameh* (in line 4) is another name for the *sepat* fish (in line 2). Therefore line 4 includes a play on words that references line 2. I have translated the literal meaning as explained by Bapak Harjito and not the Javanese play on words.
Parabesan smara bangun
They call him Asmarabangun
Sepat domba kali aya
The large Sepat fish in the Aya river
Oja dolan lan wong priya
Avoid always going out with the boys
Gerameh nora prasaja
Because nothing good will come of it

Like the first section, when the tempo slows (iromo II) the male chorus sing two verses of the macapat verse form Pangkur whilst I sing the same lyrics in the sindhen style. This second verse also includes various pauses (pos) in which I sing brief a capella portions of the Pangkur text.

Pangkur 1
Mingkar mingkur ing akara
Consider the following teaching
Akarana karenan mardi
The way a child can gain self-assurance
Sinawung resmining kidung
As expressed in this beautiful song
Sinuba sinukarta
Which will be received happily and with an open heart
Mrih kretarta
Is to control
pakartining ngelmu luhung
the passions by acquiring spiritual knowledge
Kang tumrap neng tanah Jowo
The people who live in Java
Agama agaming aji
Should follow the religion of their king

Pangkur 2
Jinejer neng wedha tama
Side by side with those most sublime
ramane dewe
ramane dewe
Mrih tan kemba kembenganing pambudi
Brimming with good character
Mangka nadya tuwa pikun
Even later in old, forgetful age
Man-eman eman eman eman
Man-eman eman eman eman
Yen tan mikani rasa
Untouched by feeling
Wê la gones gones ganes wicarane
Wê la gones
Wê la gones
Yekti sepi
All quiet,
yo romo yo romo ramane dewe
yo romo yo romo ramane dewe
asepa lir sepa samun
cloaked in disguise

Janji sabra waton ra kesusu
Promise to be patient and not in a hurry;
sawahle jembajempar parine lemu-lemu
The fields are vast, the rice is plump
Samangsaning pakumpulan
Mankind collected together
Man-eman eman
Man-eman eman
Gonyak ganyuk lelingsemi
Uncomfortable and embarrassing

The music shifts into the piece Ayak 9 in the slow style (tikel).

Wangsaran\(^{84}\) (in Javanese)
Romo – janur\(^{85}\) gunung,
young mountain coconut fronds
Janur gunung ukuran bunder pinolo
young mountain coconut fronds to wrap around the heart
Maneman – ojo leren
gones gones wicarane
Yen jangkane durung teko
young mountain coconut fronds to wrap around the heart

Translation (Kartomi 1973: 214)
Consider the following teaching
The way a child can gain self-assurance
As expressed in this beautiful song
Which will be received happily and with an open heart
Is to control
the passions by acquiring spiritual knowledge
The people who live in Java
Should follow the religion of their king

Translation (by the author)
Side by side with those most sublime
ramane dewe
Brimming with good character
Even later in old, forgetful age
Man-eman eman eman eman
Untouched by feeling
Wê la gones gones ganes wicarane
Wê la gones
All quiet,
yo romo yo romo ramane dewe
cloaked in disguise
Sung by the musicians:
Promise to be patient and not in a hurry;
The fields are vast, the rice is plump
Mankind collected together
Man-eman eman
Uncomfortable and embarrassing

The music shifts into the piece Ayak 9 in the slow style (tikel).

Wangsaran\(^{84}\) (in Javanese)
Romo – janur\(^{85}\) gunung,
young mountain coconut fronds
Janur gunung ukuran bunder pinolo
young mountain coconut fronds to wrap around the heart
Maneman – ojo leren
gones gones wicarane
Yen jangkane durung teko
young mountain coconut fronds to wrap around the heart

84 A Central Javanese rhyming couplet of twelve lines each with a 4 + 8 internal structure.
85 Janur is typically used to make festive decorations for wedding and other celebrations.
romo – yen jangkane durung teko  
Romo -- until your steps bring you there.

The music pauses.

Live spoken text:
I would say that I finally died of imperfection; I died of unrequited perfectionism. The life that I built in Java was meant to withstand Mount Bromo’s lava and flowing fire but the people around me, the musicians, the dancers, the father of my children, the neighbours all contented themselves with constructing temporary shelters from flimsy bamboo and sugar cane leaves. These they enjoyed, until covered in rich volcanic ash they fell, rotten to the ground. But when I perform these songs and dances in Perth as I resurrect myself I feel myself drifting on the ethereal contentment of the spirits and demons who inhabit the rivers and the streams of Java.

The gender cues me to sing ‘Maneman eman eman eman’ and the musicians resume playing.

**Wangsalan (in Javanese)**

Sun watoro, lamun siro darbe tresno. 
Romo – singo wismo, 
wismane wong wis praloyo – 
romo romo 
Sun kekudang, sun kekudang – romo 
romo 
Sun kekudang – romo – kacakup ing 
saneskoro.

**Translation (by the author)**

I believe, that you are my true love 
*Romo – lion of the house*

The house of the ruined one – 
*romo romo*

I will comfort you – *romo romo*

I will comfort you – *romo* – for all your disappointments

The performance ends with a brief clip in which the musicians start to play the opening phrases of Ladrang Pangkur but burst into laughter when a rooster starts to crow loudly and we have to start all over.

Members of the audience are invited to enjoy light refreshments to be served in the student common room after the recital.

**Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank Pak Kusnadi and my daughters (Condro and Ndaru) for their love and passion. Special thanks also to my supervisors Jane Davidson, Steve Chinna and Jonathan McIntosh for their on-going encouragement and support.
Appendix C

Performing Recital 2 – *Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle* \(^{86}\)

*(Annotated Programme Notes)*

**Cover** \(^{87}\)

Srimaya’s Fall from the Demon’s Circle: A Musical in Five Poems

Karen Elizabeth (Sekararum) Schrieber

Doctor of Musical Arts Recital

7pm Monday and Tuesday 25 and 26 February 2013

The Tricycle Theatre
Mount Lawley Senior High School

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Welcome:

In 1990, and whilst a postgraduate anthropology student, I travelled from Charlottesville, Virginia, US, to the city of Malang, East Java, Indonesia, to attend an in-country language program. During this time, I developed a fascination with the Javanese performing arts, so much so that I chose to remain in Java for the next 20 years. During this period (1990-2010), I lived in the village of Tumpang where I married a Javanese puppet master (*dhalang*) and had two daughters. In addition, and as a result of studying with many eminent Javanese performers, I developed a reputation as a dancer and singer (*pesindhen*) of traditional Javanese music of national repute. I was also

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\(^{86}\) Providing greater access to the performance by providing a written text, definitions of terms and extensive footnotes explanations of cultural material for the reader and the audience was an important part of the reflection process for the development of the DMA. Because I did not wish to disrupt the flow of the performance or the poems, audience members were provided with resources that they could choose to explore or ignore.

\(^{87}\) Unless otherwise noted, the artwork reproduced throughout the programme is the work of the author. Photo on page 1 by Katarina Popp and used with permission.
deeply intrigued by the tradition of singer-dancers whose ranks I eventually joined as a performer. The tradition of female performers who are equally adept at singing and dancing (tandhak tayub) is widespread throughout Java. Such individuals are also important in regards to the magic and mysticism that infuses traditional Javanese life. For example, annual village purification ceremonies considered essential to community wellbeing always include performances by professional singer-dancers. Because of my interest in tandhak tayub, I also took the opportunity to study the various dances associated with this genre, such as the unique Malang style Beskalan dance performed as part of this evening’s performance. Demonstrating the ability of the dancers to appease both the gods and the community, such dances are always performed to musical accompaniment provided by a gamelan ensemble.

Gamelan music is integral to traditional Javanese society. Performed by an ensemble comprised of bronze gongs, metallophones, drums, flutes and female singers (pesindhen), this music is iconic of the emblematic soundscapes of Javanese life and culture. There are two distinct tuning systems in Javanese gamelan, pelog (a seven-tone tuning system) and slendro (a five-toned tuning system), as well as numerous modes (pathet) within each tuning system.

The music and video used for tonight’s performance were recorded in November 2012 in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. Throughout Java, traditional dance is almost always accompanied by gamelan music. And because tonight’s performance is based in Java and is informed by Javanese dance, music and theatre, I have therefore attempted to recreate some of the Javanese sound and landscape by providing video footage of the musicians who helped create these recordings. The audio-visual footage which accompanies tonight’s performance is thus meant to provide some sense of the instruments, the musicians without whose support I could not have created this production, and the ubiquitous noise that accompanies life in Java: children talking and laughing, roosters crowing, and the motorcycles and trucks that inevitably disrupted each and every recording session! I extend my thanks to the musicians, as my associate performers, for their participation. I would also like to extend my particular thanks to the wonderful young associate artists who join me on stage this evening.

**The Work:**
This evening’s performance is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Music Arts (DMA) degree at The University of Western Australia. Inspired by Javanese traditional dance practices and Javanese sung poetry epics (macapat), the work is comprised of traditional Javanese gamelan pieces (gendhing) and newly composed poems written in English. During tonight’s performance I have chosen to sing in the Javanese language while performing classical gamelan pieces (gendhing), however, I sing in English when I am providing narrative content. Adhering to Javanese sung poetry (macapat) performance practice, each of the English poems is based on one of the many macapat sung poetry verse forms, and is differentiated by mood, melody, number of lines, feet/syllables in each line and ending vowel sound. The way I have structured the work, dividing the narrative into five
‘poems’ (each poem reflecting a different mood which is in turn denoted by the mood and lighting) serves to reference the mysticism associated with the number five in Javanese cosmology. For instance, the five compass points (north, south, east, west and the centre), the five humours (anger, misery/eternity, love/pleasure, lust/passion, and death, perfection and peace), the five elements (water/blood, air/wind, earth/flesh, fire, and ‘I’) and the five stages of mystical development (living by appearances and social laws, consciously reflecting on the outer world, taking the first steps towards a fuller inner life, beginning to confront the Truth, inner harmony, and unity with the self) and the five colours (white, black, yellow, red and teal) all contribute to the evolution of Srimaya, the heroine of tonight’s story. Five is also thought to reflect the spokes on the wheel (cokro manggilingan) that always turning, changes one’s fate from minute to minute. The division of the narrative into five poems reflects this progression through the wheel of five cosmic phases: Srimaya confronts the dangers of using her mystical powers, her actions invite supernatural retaliation and so the wheel turns against her for the time being.

By undertaking a unique and exciting approach to Javanese sung poetry (macapat) and mysticism, the current work also performatively investigates the processes involved in producing contemporary theatre based on traditional Javanese performance art in a multicultural and Western performance context. The diverse elements of Western academic discourse, non-Western, multicultural performance practice and embodied knowledge together create a unique opportunity to produce and perform creative works that push the boundaries of syncretic performance art.

Synopsis:
Tonight’s work, loosely based on the life of a Javanese singer-dancer who also became a notorious shaman during the early 1950s, tells the story of a young woman named Srimaya. Following the ritual prayer-poem, Asmaradana (the Javanese version of an overture), the story begins with Srimaya dangerously ill with fever. Spirits visit her fever-induced dreams to bring her the gift of the dance Beskalan (literally ‘beginnings’). Following local Javanese tradition, Srimaya begins to perform as an itinerant beskalan singer-dancer (tandak tayub). With the help of her spirit guides, Srimaya gains considerable skills so that the spirits pay her another visit. Following this, she is inspired to perform a second dance whose movements magically create the liminal cosmos necessary for the ritual purification ‘ruwatan’ ceremony found throughout Java. This purification ceremony is closely associated with shamanic rites and with the witchdoctors (dhukun) who are called upon to cure those suffering from illness, misfortune and demon possession by the evil ogre Bethoro Kolo.

In Java, the myth of Bethoro Kolo addresses fundamental human questions about the origin and arbitrary nature of evil. It tells how the monster Kolo is born from the spilt seed of the god Siva. Kolo subsequently becomes a danger to mankind after he acquires an appetite for human flesh when his mother, the goddess Durga, accidentally slices off the tip of her finger and it falls into Kolo’s plate of rice. The gods challenge the monster and ultimately contemplate ways that he may be neutralised. By performing purification ceremonies that include sacred mantra, sacred movement, and that ritually retell the story of Kolo’s birth, evil is held at bay and order is restored to the universe.

Having created a magic dance that embodies the cosmic order, Srimaya willingly becomes a shaman. She performs her new dance with four other women who together represent the mystical ‘five’ of the Javanese pantheon: compass directions, colour,
elements and emotions. However, because Srimaya lacks sufficient mystical training, she is overcome by powerful demons. At the end of the performance, Srimaya accepts the inexorable power of the demons. No longer fighting the demons, Srimaya enters a meditative state and finds inner harmony and peace within herself.

ACT I
The stage is dimly lit and empty save for a songbook placed in the centre of the stage. Black curtains are pulled forward to cover the right and left wings of the stage. An audio track of the East Javanese masked dance Klono plays while the five demons, arrayed in the balconies that flank the right and left sides of the stage, make growling and other demon sounds as the audience takes their seats in the Mount Lawley Senior High School performance theatre, the Tricycle. The back wall is covered with a white curtain on which audio-visual recordings are projected throughout the performance. My associate dancers and I perform to these backing tracks and I sing to them à la karaoke.

The prologue starts with a bamboo flute (suling) riff whilst the video displays a brazier (prapen) smoking with incense. I cross from downstage to kneel in the spotlight that illuminates centre stage whilst the rest of the space is in darkness. Fading from the prapen, the video now shows dhalang macapat, Ki Supatman who sits cross-legged on the floor with four other musicians. Accompanied by flute (suling), gong and wooden xylophone (gambang), Pak Supat plays the opening notes for asmaradana babok on his zither (siter). The musicians are dressed in their street clothes. In the Tricycle theatre, I kneel in time to sing the first line of the English language opening prayer stanza of the asmaradana verse form. My hands resting lightly on the tops of my cloth-covered thighs, I sing:

Programme text and macapat verse form sung live:

Asmaradana, \(^{89}\) slendro\(^{90}\)
Daily we’re haunted by our dreams,
Visited by those not of this world.
Blood moon darkens the twilight sky,
Powerless prey of demons
Who call the winds and howl to stars
and light the night with all things nocturne.
Crouched to the east, west, north and south.

As the gong indicates the end of the asmaradana, I pick up the songbook. On screen a drawing of a bird skull appears with the words ‘Poem 1: White – Srimaya Begins’. This fades and is replaced by the words ‘White / The east / beginnings / water / A concern with appearances’. In Java, white is associated with the east, with beginnings, with water, and, in mysticism, with a focus on appearances. Poem One: White narrates the fever dreams that initiate Srimaya into the tandhak tayub world.

Poem One: White – Srimaya Begins

\(^{88}\) I include the stage directions here to assist the reader in visualizing the performance as it was presented in 2012. Such directions were not included in the actual programme notes.

\(^{89}\) Asmorodono, sung here, is a short 7-line poem that is often used as an introductory verse in Javanese sung poetry epic (macapat) performances. Asmorodono is said to be about ‘beginnings’: everything starts with the heart and with that first attraction: you are not born out of nowhere.

\(^{90}\) Slendro is a five-toned tuning system of the gamelan orchestra.
With the book open in my hands I follow the zither’s opening notes as the video fades into a recording of the musicians playing in Java. I sing the first sinom:

Programme text and macapat verse form sung live:

Poem One: White

Sinom, slendro
Sri’s dancing wakes the spirit world.
Her face so pale, eyes glassy bright.
Pouring herself into each move,
Swaying in the wind to music,
Driving back her troubled dreaming.
Guttered lamps gasp out as the cusp
Of dawn fingers reach to the moon.
Trembling fingers feverish,
Sri’s feet scuffle offerings and stains of alcohol.

The siter plays again, this time in the pelog tuning system. Again, cued by the zither, I sing the following Sinom in pelog:

Sinom, pelog

Beskalan is Sri’s sacred dance,
The winds make this her dance sublime.
Timed with the beat the movement flows,
Each flick of the scarf mesmerising
Driven by brash metal clanging

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91 In Java, white is associated with the east, with beginnings, with water, and in mysticism with a focus on appearances.
92 Sinom is a song about being youthfully sure of yourself – you know what you like, you love someone and you both care about each other.
93 Traditional Javanese performances include many offerings to the gods and ancestors. Bananas, rice, coconuts, flowers, chicken and sacred water are placed around the performance space. Alcohol called arak is also poured on the ground for the ancestors to enjoy its essence.
94 a seven-tone tuning system of the gamelan orchestra.
95 Beskalan is a dance that is unique to Malang, East Java, and is traditionally performed by singer-dancers (tandhak tayub) as part of the opening dance at sacred sites. Within such contexts, not only do female singer/dancers fulfil a social and ritualistic function but they also provide entertainment to (mostly) men who tend to imbibe considerable amounts of alcohol at such events. Beskalan is the quintessential female Malang-style dance.
and melodic shifts of the drum, 
Her scarf alights the fragrant air, 
The winds release Sri from her sleep, 
Pallid dreams embraced by the music, dance and song.

At the end of the Sinom, the final gong stroke cues the musical accompaniment to the Beskalan dance, and the musicians begin to play the gendhing, also called Beskalan.

**Beskalan Dance (sung in Javanese)**

**Dancers:** Ashlyn Bland, Lily Baitup, Telea Hotker, Jewell Wilson

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I close and place the book on the floor to signal the end of the first narrative portion of the Poem. Standing, I pull the ends of the dance scarf through my hands until I hold their tips in my fingers. I begin the first transitional movement (singget) of the Beskalan dance. Inching slowly forward, the four dancers cross the stage behind me, taking their positions in a V formation with its vortex at the top of the stage. The dancers and I are dressed in an identical fashion: we wear a long piece of cloth wrapped around our torsos to fall in a long skirt along our backs; a length of beaded velvet above our breasts to anquor the top of the cloth, a scarf tied around our waists and anquored by a satin belt; a painted headdress with yellow flowers inserted in the front on both sides; a diamanted necklace and matching long diamante earrings; upper arm ornaments (klat bahu) and female style makeup with a red V-shaped mark (ungu) between our eyebrows. Like Srimpi Limo dancers, moreover, the five colours of our costumes differentiate us. The four dancers stand at each vortex of a diamond shape: mid-stage right (yellow), upstage centre (black), mid-stage left (white) and downstage centre (red). Following the initial, introductory, segment of the dance, now facing stage right we five dancers perform a ritualised obeisance (sembah) dance sequence in unison whilst I sing parikan in Javanese.

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*Javanese Lyrics:* Javanese lyrics are written in pairs of rhyming couplets – usually about love and loss – in which the first line suggests a key word in the second line. Singer-dancer vocalists memorise numerous poetic verses and sing them at random. The singer constructs her improvised melodic lines using a combination of these couplets.

*A four-line set of two rhyming couplets (ABAB), each of between 8-10 syllables per line*
**Parikan (sung in Javanese)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Javanese</th>
<th>Translation (by the author)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ono urang kecemplung wuwu</em></td>
<td>A shrimp accidentally lands in a hawk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gajah belang bakulan jamu</em></td>
<td>A striped elephant sells herbal medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rumah tangga kudu bersatu</em></td>
<td>Households need to work as one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ojo seneng tukar lan padu</em></td>
<td>And not fight or quarrel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sepet-sepet sawone mentah</em></td>
<td>Sour is the taste of an unripe sawo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lek dipangan rasane legi</em></td>
<td>Eaten, it tastes sweet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Diempet-empet soyo ra betah</em></td>
<td>Keeping quiet becomes unbearable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ojo gawe gelaning ati</em></td>
<td>Do not make my heart disappointed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the end of the first repetition of this particular, sembah, dance sequence, the ‘yellow’ Srimpi dancer at stage left stays kneeling on the floor facing stage right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Javanese</th>
<th>Translation (by the author)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Angin-angin layangono</em></td>
<td>Fly a kite in the wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Beber kloso tengah ponirat</em></td>
<td>Roll out a mat in the middle of the yard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the next repetition, the three dancers turn clockwise to repeat the sembah dance sequence, facing downstage where the ‘black’ Srimpi dancer kneels on the floor, facing upstage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Javanese</th>
<th>Translation (by the author)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Tega nyawang gak tega nundhung</em></td>
<td>I can bear to watch but I cannot bear to send you away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Eling-eling kebecikane</em></td>
<td>Remembering all your good deeds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ‘red’ and ‘teal’ Srimpi dancers face stage right where the ‘white’ Srimpi dancer stays kneeling facing stage left.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Javanese</th>
<th>Translation (by the author)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Awar-awar godhonge jati</em></td>
<td>Awar-awar, the leaves of a teak tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Godhong kluwih diiris roto</em></td>
<td>The kluwih leaf is chopped evenly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ‘teal’ Srimpi dancers faces upstage where the ‘red’ Srimpi dancer remains in a kneel on the floor facing her downstage. Just like the dance costumes, the repetition of kneeling sembah reference the ‘four directions and/or five in the centre’ (keblat papat limo pancer) and provide visual clues to the symbolic mysticism that links the introductory Beskalan dance and the Srimpi Limo to be performed in Poem Three: Yellow.

On the fifth repetition, having turned a full 360 degrees, I return to my original centre position and, facing the audience once again whilst the other four dancers kneel in a diamond shape around me, I perform the rest of this portion of the dance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Javanese</th>
<th>Translation (by the author)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Sopo tawar rasaning ati</em></td>
<td>Who can bear the feeling in the heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lek digawe sakmoto-moto</em></td>
<td>When you are treated carelessly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Kidul mendhung rak ngalor mendhung</em></td>
<td>The south is cloudy rak the north is cloudy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

98 In transcribing the East Javanese ABAB rhyming couplets, I have follow ed my East Javanese teachers who, when writing in roman script, typically write o rather than the more ‘correct’ a.

99 A parikan is popular sweet tropical fruit.

100 Rak is a vocable used in East Javanese speech and in ngidung style singing and translates loosely as ‘so…’.
Gunungsari kidule Mogal

[The village] Gunungsari is south of [the village] Mogal

A walking section provides a bridge between this first segment of the dance and the last segment in which I sing:

Sopo ngerti mobat-mobete
Who understands
Godhong gedhang janur klopo
Banana leaf, young coconut fronds
Sopo ngerti wiwit kawite
Who understands the beginnings
Bopo adam lan ibu kowo
Father Adam and Mother Eve

Joko Tingkir rak numpak boyo
Joko Tingkir rides a horse-drawn cart
Arep sowan marang kraton
He hopes to visit the palace
Ojo mikir duweke konco
Do not think about what your friends have
Tuwas edan ra kelakon
You will go crazy for nothing

Kidul mendhung rak ngalor mendhung
The south is cloudy rak the north is cloudy
Gunungsari kidule Mogal
[The village] Gunungsari is south of [the village of] Mogal
Kidul bingung rak ngalor bingung
The south is cloudy rak the north is cloudy
Brebes mili gak tego ninggal
Tears fill my eyes but I just cannot leave

Omah genteng rak saponono
Sweep the tile-roofed house
Cagak pilar dilabur putih
Paint the pillars white
Abot enteng rak lakonono
Accept the good and the bad
Ora kuwat tinggalan mulih
If you cannot bear it, just return home

Wetan kali rak kulon kali
East of the river rak west of the river
Arep nyabrang gak no wote
I want to cross but I have no boat
Wetan gati rak kulon gati
Love in the east rak lover in the west
Lek tak timbang podho abote
Comparing them, I love them equally

Cipto roso langening driyo
The start of feeling is the story of love
Dworowati Bethoro Kresno
Dworowati Bethoro Kresno

At the end of the dance, I sink to kneel on the floor. Lit by the spot that obscures the other dancers, I sing the following sendhon:

Programme text and macapat verse form sung live:

Sendhon

101

Talents all aglow, Sri catches the eyes of many worthless, shiftless souls
The villagers demanding that she dance for them
And by her side the spirits always lurk
They teach her the most popular tunes
Songs that entrance her
Of singers and dancers like her
So travelling in every direction of the map
Sri visits the graves of those dead and gone
She collects the shards of their rich, rotting, wind-blown souls.

101 The term sendhon typically denotes songs sung by a puppet master (dhalang) during a performance of shadow puppetry or mask dance drama to provide narrative content.
The lights go down to signal the end of the poem.

Poem Two: Black – Srimaya Becomes a Pesindhen

Suling music again accompanies the screened projection of ‘Poem 2 – Black – Srimaya Becomes a Pesindhen’ then fades into:

In Java, black is associated with the north, with worldly self-serving and physical desires, with wind and breath, and in mysticism with a taking the first steps towards a fuller inner life. In Poem Two: Black, the sung narrative tells of Srimaya’s progression into womanhood, symbolized by verbal descriptions of her as an itinerant performing artist. On-screen, the gender plays a brief introduction to a Central Javanese style Sinom. Together we five dancers perform choreographed non-traditional dance that depict traditional prayer movements to suggest the start of Srimaya’s spiritual quest while I sing the Sinom.

Programme text and macapat verse form sung live:

Sinom, pelog
After months of itinerant dance
Sri trains to become a pesindhen
Sacrifices made to the gods:
Rice red and white; chicken head and feet
Seven flowers fill a basin
Water from seven sources, too.
Sri takes her place, collects her thoughts, prepared
Vessel to five winds is Sri
She kneels attentive: gender and drum begin the song.

---

102 In Java, black is associated with the north, with worldly self-serving and physical desires, with wind and breath, and in mysticism with a taking the first steps towards a fuller inner life.

103 The female singer in a gamelan orchestra. An extensive repertoire is required of every aspiring singer of traditional gamelan music (pesindhen) and singer-dancer (tandhak tayub). These include musical compositions (gendhing) of varying degrees of difficulty, distinctive song styles and dance pieces favoured in social dancing contexts (tayub).

104 A metallaphone with 12 to 14 thin, bronze keys suspended over cylindrical resonators and struck with two padded mallets.
At the end of the sinom, I then sing the classical gamelan orchestral piece, ‘Music Theatre-style Mijil’ (Mijil Kethoprak). Unlike the audio-visual backing tracks used throughout the rest of the Srimaya performance, for this composition the video clip is from the December 2011 recording session in which the musicians are dressed in performance gear. The song is presented in a more formal atmosphere that is intended to show Srimaya’s burgeoning success as a performer.

Programme text and macapat verse form sung live:

Ketawang105 Mijil Kethoprak106
In the moonlight, "eling-eling"107
Sri starts her pilgrimage #santinet#108
To control the demons
#pipopabrik singpodhoprihatin#109
Effervescent #lungomrono#110
effervescent winds blow the scent
#ojo ngece wong oranduwe#111
Corpse rotting pungent frangipani112
#etan bali ngulon oposedyanekelakon#113
Sri’s magic flashes bright
Alarmed, the demons run

A black out signals the end of the poem.

Poem Three: Yellow114 – The Ritual Purification

The bamboo suling accompanies the screened projection of ‘Poem 3 - Yellow – The Ritual Purification’ before fading into the symbol for Poem Three with the words ‘Yellow / the west / love and pleasure / flesh and the earth / confronting the truth’ across the screen.

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105 Ketawang denotes a musical form based on a 16-beat cycle, usually played at a slow tempo.
106 Mijil Kethoprak is a popular short composition for gamelan ensemble.
107 The musicians sing stylised vocal cries called ‘senggakan’. These are chosen at random and may include things like ‘eling-eling’ which means ‘remember!’ and form part of the texture of this particular musical composition.
108 The word santinet is a vocable that derives from the root ‘santi’, to praise god.
109 English translation: ‘factory pipe; be aware!’ (following the tradition of wangsalan rhyming couplets, the first line (pabrik) suggests a loose rhyme in the second line (prihatin))
110 ‘Go on over there!’
111 ‘Don’t criticise those less fortunate’
112 In Java, frangipangi is considered a grave flower because it is most often found in cemeteries where the trees grown in abundance.
113 ‘From the east back to the west, will you make it happen?’
114 In Java, yellow is associated with the west, with love and pleasure, with the earth and flesh, and in mysticism with beginning to confront the truth.
In Java, yellow is associated with the west, with love and pleasure, with the earth and flesh, and in mysticism with beginning to confront the truth. Poem Three: Yellow was initially inspired by the manuscript story of Srimaya’s pilgrimage to the Tengger mountain gravesite where she ‘meets’ the historical figure, Muskayah. In alluding to this journey and in referencing the ritual purification ceremony (ruwatan), Poem Three: Yellow focuses on the dangers associated with learning and practicing magic prematurely as exemplified by Srimaya’s ascent to practicing shaman. Following a well-timed rooster crow on the audio-visual recording, in the Tricycle theatre, the four Srimpi dancers file from the stage, leaving me to sing the composition Ayak-ayak Manyura signalled on-screen by the drum.

_Ayak-ayak manyura_115 (sung in Javanese)

Because the words sung here are not intended to convey narrative content, I sing poetic Javanese texts specifically used by pesindhen when singing _gendhing_. I sing:

**Wangsalan**116 (in Javanese)

_Suteng endro, pradyane Sri Bomantara_

_Sun watara_

_ramane dewe – lamun siro darbe tresno_

_Gones gones nenes_

_sun watara – romo_

_lamun siro darbe tresno_

_Man eman eman eman_

_gendes luwes saksolahe romo_

_Witing klopo yo mas_

_Kalapa kang masih mudho_

_Man eman man eman eman eman_

_sripat sripit lembehane – romo –_

_Saklugune; Saklugune, mung mardi pikir raharja._

**Translation (by the author)**

The king’s child, prince Sri Bomantara

I believe

*ramane dewe* – only you are my true love

_Gones gones nenes_

I believe – _romo_

_only you are my true love_

_Man eman eman eman_

_gendes luwes saksolahe – romo_

_A coconut tree – _yo mas_

_A coconut that is still young_

_Lit. ‘it is too bad, too bad, too bad, too bad’_

_sripat sripit lembehane – romo –_

_Lit. ‘swaying, swaying goes her walk’ – _romo_

_Without deceit; Without deceit, just training in prosperous thoughts._

I open the songbook as I continue to sing _wangsalan_. A final gong stroke indicates that the music has moved into the _gendhing_ Dandanggula Tlutur. I continue to sing

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115 One of the formal structures and names of a _gendhing_. This piece is often used in performances of shadow puppetry (_wayang kulit_). _Manyura_ is the name of one of the _slendro_ tuning modes (_pathet_).

116 A Central Javanese rhyming couplet of twelve lines each with a 4 + 8 internal structure.
Wangsalan for the first part of the piece before commencing to sing the first dhandhanggula.

**Wangsalan (in Javanese)**

Janur gunung –
gones – ukuran bunder pinala
Ojo leren – gones –
ojo leren yen jangkane durung teko.

**Translation (by the author)**

Young mountain coconut fronds –
gones – to wrap around the heart
Do not stop – gones –
do not stop until your steps bring you there.

Programme text and macapat verse form sung live:

**Dandanggula**

The tale of the ogre Kolo goes like this:
Created by Siva’s lust and Durga’s blood
The monster had a taste for flesh
Yet it never quenched his lust.
To fight the birth rights that accrued to him
Hapless victims crunched in his jaw –
To fend off maggot bugs,
Magic rites the only way
Scented waters, seven springs, perfumes, flowers picked
Five magic winds protect their souls.

The gendhing repeats and I sing wangsalan lyrics once more before singing a second stanza of dandanggula. Following common practice for brief musical interludes that are not long enough for a complete wangsalan couplet, I repeat the final line of the wangsalan I sang before the dhandhanggula.

**Wangsalan (in Javanese)**

Ojo leren – gones – ojo leren,
yen jangkane durung teko

**Translation (by the author)**

Do not stop – gones – do not stop
until your steps bring you there.

Programme text and macapat verse form sung live:

**Dandanggula (continued)**

Without these rites, weak souls succumb to death
Fevered bodies tempt the bloody demons whose
Caterwauling wakes the dead.
They dance and stamp to the thrum
Sick with fever, Sri hears the demons’ cry,
Their mad howling clears her brain
And makes her think to school
Herself to shamanic rites and ways
The drum, the gong, the bells, her scarf, her bones – the beat!
Brash clang (and) pounding heart explode

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117 *Dandanggula* is the name of one of the macapat poetic verse forms. *Dandanggula* denotes thinking about family, unable to sleep and tossing and turning at night because of the bright sparks of your thoughts.

118 *Tlutur* refers to the use of flattened notes in the vocal and spike fiddle (*rebab*) harmonic lines to create a sad and subdued atmosphere.
The video recording of the full ensemble is replaced by a new audio-visual projection. Pak Supat is shown playing accompaniment to another verse of *dandanggula*, this time in the Malang macapat style. In addition to sitar the accompaniment includes gong, gambang and suling.

**Programme text and macapat verse form sung live:**

**Dandanggula (continued)**

**Undisciplined bodies** weak in spirit
Can in mysticism be led astray
Into dangerous longing and rage.
When Sri danced to fire that burned,
To elements: water, earth and wind,
To musicians, bronze chimes and gongs.
These talismen she knew
Would keep her safe from all harm’s way
Little suspecting the dark, light and shamanic
Would take her magic and steal her soul

Dreamed dancing cured her fever reverie.
Waking, she called five village madrigals.
Shouldering instruments, the five
Brought drum, two *saron* and a flute
With a gong under whose bronze hanging
Sri knelt between the compass points
Endowed with vibrant hues
Blazing both bright and luminescent
Emerald moves shimmering between the flaming breeze
Dancing in richly gilded cloth.

*At the end of the second Malang-style dandanggula, I put down the storybook and rise to join the four dancers who have returned to the stage. Together we circle the stage to take our places in a square with the white Srimpi dancer in the centre. These five positions represent the four compass points with ‘I’ at the centre. The red Srimpi dancer stands upstage right, the yellow upstage left, black downstage right and me, in teal, upstage left.*

**Srimpi Limo Dance**

**Dancers:** Ashlyn Bland, Lily Baitup, Telea Susan Hotker, Jewell Wilson

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119 Experienced Javanese mystics warn against the dangers of meditation and mysticism when it is not free of egoistic motives known as *pamrih*. Even when driven by the desire for a positive goal, this type of mysticism is considered as disturbing of cosmic order or divine will. It is ‘black magic’, and thus invites supernatural retaliation.

120 The *saron* is one of the metallophone instruments used in a Javanese gamelan ensemble.

121 Ritual purification ceremonies (*ruwatan*) are most typically performed within shadow puppetry (*wayang kulit*) performances. The area surrounding Malang, East Java, is unique, however, in having a tradition of the *Srimpi Limo Ruwatan* in which the dancers take the place of the shadow puppet performance, and at the end the puppet master (*dhalang*) carries out the ritualized event. This dance was pioneered by singer-dancer, Muskayah, in the 1940s.
Srimpi Limo
Throughout the following Srimpi Limo dance the dancers exchange positions at the end of each dance section by moving around the square: I move into the centre, the white Srimpi dancer moves from the centre to downstage right, the black Srimpi dancer moves from downstage right to upstage right, the red Srimpi dancer moves to upstage left and the yellow Srimpi dancer moves into my former position at downstage left. The repetitions are always balanced so that every dance move, such as stylistically putting on an earring or a bracelet, is performed first to the right and then to the left. After a fifth repetition, the music slows and I sing wangsalan.

Suteng endro, pradyane sri bomantoro
Sun watara – lamun siro darbe tresno
Sun watara – lamun siro darbe tresno
Tambah cacah, tambah cacah –

Sembilan taji sepa sang.

The king’s child, Prince Sri Bomantara
I believe – only you are my true love
I believe – only you are my true love
Increase the numbers, increase the numbers
Nine pairs of spurs.

After hearing little from the demons since Poem One: White, there they are audible once again.

Mangka paling, mangka paling –
maring wadya kang leledo

It is most likely, it is most likely
They will go to the most heroic soldiers

The Srimpi dancers move to their next positions, walking in a swaying slow walk whilst holding the ends of the dance scarf with the fingers of both hands and out to their sides.

Jarweng janmo – ramane dewe –
janmo kang koncatan jiwo
Wong prawiro mati lelabuh negoro

The incarnation of man – ramane dewe
Man who has lost his soul
The bravest lose their lives defending their country

The Srimpi dancers exchange positions again and continue to dance whilst the demons appear from under the white video screen. The demons invert the cosmic order by invading the performance space and lifting up the screen on which the video is projected, destroying the illusion of the Javanese performance world. Theatrically, the demons rupture the world, leaving it in chaos. Moreover, invading the performance space during this contemplative, slow section of the dance represents the struggle to leave behind mortal desire and embrace meditation and spiritual advancement.

Saji siswo – saji siswo, arane boso nawolo
Nadyan lamun – nadyan lamun nyalemun tanpo upomo

Studious – studious, understanding the words of the text
Even though – even though, outrageously daydreaming

The Srimpi dancers fight a battle with the demon’s that parallels those often invoked during shadow puppet theatre to portray the fight of good pitted against evil. One of the demons attacks the red Srimpi dancer and is struck down and hurt during this fight.

122 A similar dramatic device, known as goro-goro, is employed in shadow puppet (wayang kulit) performances in the middle of the night. The interlude is often used to relieve tension before continue the story until its conclusion at dawn.
In falling, the demon is attacked by the other demons.

Den taberi, angaruhi barang karyo Working hard, brings its own rewards

I briefly fight with and drive off each of the other demons in turn. Once the demons are driven off, all five dancers turn in place and slowly lower into a kneeling position for the following sembah obeisance.

Hong wilaheng – sekaring bawono langgeng Hong wilaheng – flower of the eternal world

Following the final gong stroke of the ‘To Remember’ (Eling-eling) music that has accompanied the dance up to this point, the music transitions into another sacred East Javanese gendhing ‘Penance’ (Dhendha). The other four Srimpi dancers and I perform the ritual sembah prayer section that initiates the ritual purification ceremony. Then I signal the other Srimpi dancers to bring the defeated demon to the centre of the stage. The four dancers place the demon in front of me then return to their places at the four corners of the stage facing me and the demon. Dhendha fades into a suling version of the macapat verse form ‘basic dhandhanggula’ that melodically echoes the narrative verses heard at the beginning of the Poem Three: Yellow. The sparseness of the solo suling musical accompaniment creates a disturbing atmosphere that is simultaneously haunting, liminal and edgy. Singing purification lyrics, I begin a ritual purification ceremony.

Programme text and macapat verse form sung live:

**Ritual Purification (Dandanggula)**

Unlucky ones driven mad in spirit Can with magic rites known as ‘ruwatan’

I extract a yellow flower from where it perches in my headdress and hold it while I sing:

Be restored to their former selves. I call raging fires that burn

In a motion typical of such ritual events, I flick the flower towards Molly who, upon sensing the flowers potent magic, convulses and flails forward. That I also fall to my knees implies the connection between us, and Srimaya’s mismanagement of the power invoked by the ritual purification ceremony. The suling breaks off mid-melody, the lights go down and the audience is released into the performance interval.

123 During the recording session and in consultation with the other musicians, the drummer and I chose to use dhendha rather than the much longer Gandakusuma typical of Djupri’s sacred performances.
124 Ritual purification ceremonies (ruwatan) are relatively common in Java. Javanese legend recounts that words have magic power and gamelan music can magically control malevolent spirits (demons). There can be many reasons to hold a ritual purification that is believed to rid the sufferer of baleful influences. Some such reasons may include the order in which children are born, children born at sunrise or sunset or for breaking a mortar or a pestle or overturning a pot for boiling water. In this case, the victim has been driven mad with excess.
To scorch the demons inside.

The demons take the places of the Srimpi dancers after driving them off stage. The words ‘The Demons’ appear on-screen against a red background.

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**Interval (10 minutes)**

**Music:** *Gendhing Malangan* (Malang style)

**ACT II**

The second act opens with the broken demon prostrate on an otherwise empty stage. A demon print is projected on screen whilst a verse of pre-recorded Mijil plays to introduce the second act. A red wash covers the stage as the demons enter to sit in the four corners of the stage.

**Programme text and pre-recorded *macapat* verse form:**

*Mijil*¹²⁵  
Magic viciously devours the careless  
I thought that I controlled the demons¹²⁶ –  
Their wildness shows I am deceived  
North, south, east, west: just tawdry, scathing winds  
Pregnant with slime and filth  
Demons dancing wild lust

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**Poem Four – Red¹²⁷**  
*The Demons*

Following the interval, Poem Four: Red engages the lust and rage associated with unbridled emotions, devils and demons. ‘Poem Four – Red – The Demons’ appears on screen. Then fades into:

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¹²⁵ *Mijil* is the name of one of the *macapat* poetic verse forms. It implies birth, the seeds of humanity and in this context, acts as a prologue to Act II.  
¹²⁶ According to Mulder (2005: 53), treading the mystical path is a dangerous and difficult endeavour. One may become possessed by evil forces, go mad, or be led astray. People should certainly not engage in it at too young an age, when one is thought to be unable to muster the necessary discipline over body and spirit.  
¹²⁷ In Java, red is associated with the south, with lust, passion and madness, with fire, mountains and money, and in mysticism with gaining complete insight and eternal mastery of self and worldly life.
In Java, red is associated with the south, with lust, passion and madness, with fire, mountains and money, and, in mysticism, with gaining complete insight and eternal mastery of self and worldly life. The fourth poem is composed exclusively of the demons’ celebratory dance, Grebeg Sabrang; the only narrative content is provided in the form of the mood song (greget saut) that I sing over the introductory music to the dance. The abrupt start to Poem Four: Red reflects the character of the scene and the natures of the demons. Unlike the refined movements found in Beskalan and Srimpi Limo, the demons dance with large, sweeping gestures and bold striking poses. They are costumed in red and black, their faces are covered in dark black make-up eye brows and moustaches.

Programme text and macapat verse form sung live:

The Dance of the Demons (Grebeg Sabrang)
Dancers: Molly Andrews-Taylor, Charlotte Jones, Ndaru Kartikaningsih, Maggie Mather, Lorraine Rosson

Greget Saut
Dark clouds roll into the firmament
And bloodied demons writhe below
They gnash their teeth and spit out bones
Ooo – they hunt like vulturous ghouls
They rob the graves of those newly dead

Following this verse of Greget Saut, I sing sindhenan in English throughout the rest of the dance by first repeating parts of the above macapat:

Parikan (sung in English)
Dark clouds roll into the firmament
And bloodied demons writhe below
They gnash their teeth and spit out bones
They rob the graves of those newly dead

And then using lines from the pangkur that will introduce Poem 5: Teal:

Clouds churn and fill the sky with rain
Robbed of their food, the demons collect
Bringing with them spiders, snakes, scorpions
And vermin too, illness, death, black plague.

The demon who was attacked during Poem Three: Yellow is now revived and released by her fellow demons. She then performs the second half of the dance together with her compatriots. At the end of the dance, as the lights fade, the demons exit in four directions.

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Greget saut is a mood song sung by the puppeteer (dhalang) during a performance of shadow puppetry or mask dance drama during moments of heightened tension.
Programme text and macapat verse form sung live:

Poem Five – Teal – Srimaya’s Fall

Suling music plays while the screen displays: ‘Poem Five – Teal – Srimaya’s Fall’. This fades to:

In Java, teal is associated with the centre, with peace, eloquence, and, in mysticism, with death and perfection. At the start of the poem, I kneel in the centre of the stage holding the songbook for the last time. On-screen Pak Supat and the other musicians play the accompaniment to the macapat verse form, Pangkur.

Programme text and macapat verse form sung live:

Pangkur

Clouds churn and fill the sky with rain
Robbed of food, the demons come to collect
Bringing with them spiders, snakes, scorpions
And vermin too, illness, death, black plague.
Too young, too weak, the demons take control
The wheel turns; I sing the song of the dead
And at the end: demons do what you will!

The siter accompaniment to accompaniment fades as the spiked fiddle ( rebab ) plays the opening of the classical gamelan gendhing ‘ Buzzing Fly ’ ( Laler Mengeng ). Most often associated with death rituals, this piece denotes Srimaya’s surrender to the demons. I repeat refined female-style movements that include wrist curls and scarf flicks four times as I face each of the four compass directions in turn. Each repetition also includes a kneeled obeisance ( sembah ) like that of Poem One – White.

Gendhing Laler Mengeng ( sung in Javanese )

Pangkur is the name of one of the macapat poetic verse forms. Pangkur also denotes old age with children settled and on their own. Time is spent in meditation to prepare for the approaching judgement day.

Many musicians avoid playing the piece Laler Mengeng because it is associated with death/funerary rituals, when its performance denotes sadness and loss. The piece uses a technique called barang miring in the vocal melody that involves the lowering of certain tones in slendro to yield an intervallic structure tending towards pelog.
I begin by kneel in front of the audience. I put the songbook down for the last time. Looking down, I put my hands together in a first supplication (sembah) to the audience. I sing:

**Wangsalan (sung in Javanese)**

Peksi rojo pambabaring guno biso

The king bird – ramane dewe – spreading magic

I slowly rise to my feet...

gones gones gones – pambaring guno biso
gones gones gones – spreading magic

...and turn clockwise to face stage right while performing delicate figure eights with my wrists. My fingers alternately curl and out-stretch, then I extend my arms fully and then using the dance scarf to extend my hands velocity, I flick the dance scarf first over one hand, over the other and then over both hands together. I quickly flick my wrists to toss the ends of the dance scarf off my hands and out to the side. Finally, I gently lower myself to the floor, my hands clasped together and my thumbs resting gently between my eyebrows.

Den taberi – gones –
angaruhi barang karyo

Working hard – gones –
brings its own rewards

I kneel facing stage right.

Sekar pisang, sekar pisang, pisang
sesajining karyo.

Flower of a banana tree, flower of a banana tree, the essence of the work.

I stand and turn right while performing delicate figure eights with my wrists. My fingers alternately curl and out-stretch; I extend my arms fully and then flick the dance scarf first over one hand, over the other and, finally, over both hands together. I quickly flick my wrists to toss the ends of the dance scarf off my hands and out to the side while I sink gently into a kneeling position. My hands clasped together, I rest my thumbs between my eyebrows as I face upstage at the end of the first gong cycle.

Patut lamun, patut lamun – gones –
linuludan mring sasomo
Man eman eman – patut lamun,
linuludang mring sasomo
Gones -- janna mudha,
mudhane sang prabu kresno

It is right, it is right – gones –
to do what is best for one’s fellows
Man eman eman – it is right,
to do what is best for one’s fellows
Gones – A youth,
the youthful King Kresno

An incense burner appears on-screen then the visual returns to the rebab player before showing the shaman (dukun) whose voice can be heard intoning prayers. I stand and turn right as I perform delicate figure eights with my wrists. My fingers alternately curl and out-stretch; I extend my arms fully and then flick the dance scarf first over one hand, over the other and, finally, over both hands together. I quickly flick my wrists to toss the ends of the dance scarf off my hands and out to the side while I sink gently into a kneeling position. My hands clasped together, I rest my thumbs between my eyebrows as I face stage right.
Mumpung anom, mumpung anom, ngudi sarananing projo

Whilst young, whilst young, make a study of correct behaviour

The dukun appears again on screen and his chanted praying mixes with the gamelan music.

Gones gones gones – ngudi sarananing projo

Gones gones gones – make a study of correct behaviour

Singo wismo – gones – wismane wong wis praloyo

Lion of the house – gones – the house of the ruined one

I stand and turn right as I perform delicate figure eights with my wrists. My fingers alternately curl and out-stretch; I extend my arms fully and then flick the dance scarf first over one hand, over the other and, finally, over both hands together. I quickly flick my wrists to toss the ends of the dance scarf off my hands and out to the side while I sink gently into a kneeling position. My hands clasped together, I rest my thumbs between my eyebrows as I face the audience once more.

Sun kekudang, sun kekudang kacakup ing saniskoro

I will comfort you, I will comfort you in your disappointment

The screen fills again with a photo of the dukun. The shot also shows me with him in our home in Tumang, Malang, Indonesia. It then cuts to the incense burner.

Sun kekudang, sun kekudang romo – kacakup ing saneskoro maneman eman – kacakup ing saneskoro

I will comfort you, I will comfort you romo – in your disappointment maneman eman in your disappointment

Coming full circle, I face forward once again and perform delicate figure eights with my wrists. My fingers alternately curl and out-stretch; I extend my arms fully and then flick the dance scarf first over one hand, over the other and, finally, over both hands together. I quickly flick my wrists to toss the ends of the dance scarf off my hands and out to the side while I sink gently into a kneeling position. My hands clasped together, I rest my thumbs between my eyebrows as I kneel facing the audience for the last time. The final gong stroke is overshadowed by the voice of a shaman that is dubbed onto the audio-visual backing track that shows the dukun praying over the largest, most sacred gong in the gamelan ensemble. The dukun’s chanting crescendos as the final gong is struck for the gendhing ‘Buzzing Fly’. I shift from kneeling to sit cross-legged. The demons enter from the four compass points one by one and stand over me to stare arrogantly out into the audience. The stage darkens whilst the on-screen video plays the Sendhon Serang accompaniment and the sendhon vocal that I have pre-recorded.

Programme text and pre-recorded Sendhon:

Sendhon Serang

Light cracks against darkest morning hour

Sendhon Serang is a mood song sung by the puppet master (dhalang) during a performance of shadow puppetry or mask dance drama to provide narrative content. In this case in the East Javanese mode serang cues the end of the performance and the coming of dawn.
The bright moon quickly slips aside
The rooster’s crow sounds from outside
Vermin and bats swift hide themselves away
Dragonflies skim the stagnant water
The orb of morning sun appears

Following traditional performance practice for East Javanese shadow puppet performances, the sendhon is followed by krucilan in the serang, or ‘early morning’ mode that denotes the end of the performance and the coming of dawn.

Programme text:

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