
Reading Performance: The Case of Balinese *Baris*

Peter Dunbar-Hall

Under the influence of various epistemological paradigms, performance has increasingly become a focus of musicological discussion.¹ This focus in these studies is on both the sense of performance as instantiation of musical ideas (the act of performing) and performance as event (for example, a concert, or music as the marking of a social occurrence). One recent discussion of performance, by Nicholas Cook, is reminiscent of Barthes's idea of the 'death of the author' and discusses ways in which performers, instead of composers, contribute to meaning creation.² Cook also outlines ways in which musicologists have conceptualised performance and have used it to question the identity of the musical work. In support of the shift towards performance as the focus of critique, rather than composition as the site of meaning creation, Cook refers to ways in which music has come to be considered script (the raw material of performance) while performance has become text (a meaning-laden event relying on intention, time and context). Cook sees performance as a work to be read: a musical work becomes the record of its creator's intentions or becomes a notated entity or a precursor or impetus that allows a text to be constructed.

When applied to the music of the western art tradition, Cook's way of conceptualising music raises many unresolved questions. The worlds of acousmatic, electronic and electro-acoustic music, and how they often restrict performers and contravene relationships between composers, performers and audiences, for example, are not mentioned. Neither are the implications of performance as the outcome of aleatoric composition, and musics in which composer and performer are conflated. That some contemporary composers, especially those of complexist

¹ See, for example, Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: OUP, 1995); Stan Godlovitch, *Musical Performance: A Philosophical Study* (London: Routledge, 1998); Stephen Davies, *Musical Works and Performances: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001); Nicholas Cook, 'Music as Performance,' *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert and Richard Middleton (London: Routledge, 2003) 204–14.

² Cook, 'Music as Performance'; Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana, 1977).

works, admit that performances of their works might not be possible also raises issues about composer and audience expectations of performance. Clearly, performance is a wider field of enquiry than consideration of the canon of western music allows.

While Cook refers to popular music, jazz and other forms of music outside the Eurocentric art-music tradition, much of his essay concentrates on European art-music, something reinforced through references to 'composer,' 'notation,' 'the western "art" tradition,' and the composers Beethoven, Mozart, Schoenberg and Stravinsky cited as key reference points. Through reference to the musings of the American writer on music, Charles Rosen, Cook also privileges aspects of the canonic western art tradition as eternal and autonomous. Cook, however, does include the work of ethnomusicologists as researchers who question conventional constructions of relevance, bringing ethnomusicology, the area of music study most reliant on performance as the basis of investigation, into the debate.³

I wonder if the recent interest in performance seems odd to ethnomusicologists for whom performance, both as instantiation of ideas and as event, is a major source for their work. For ethnomusicologists, reflecting on performance underpins their writings, by describing the sources, conditions and events of experiences in the field. Individual performances loom large in their writings; for them performance as a conceptual location of personal and group identity is regularly seen as an exemplar of musical knowledge as cultural artefact.⁴ Analysis of the occurrences and implications of performance allows ethnomusicologists to engage with a vast array of approaches to culturally influenced understandings of music. For example, Weiss's investigation of embodiment through performance of Javanese music; Mackinlay's analysis of voice (after Bakhtin) in her work with Australian Aboriginal women performers; my own work on the socio-economic aspects of performances of Balinese music and dance and Harnish's use of performance of Wayang Sasak as the means of essaying negotiations of religious belief and aspects of modernity in Lombok, are recent examples of ethnomusicologically grounded research that deal with performances in a variety of very different contexts.⁵ It hardly needs pointing out that performance is the means through which much of the music ethnomusicologists study is kept alive and transmitted; performance is not only a source of information but also an important site of ethnomusicologists' theorising about music. For many ethnomusicologists, learning to perform is a standard methodological technique for gaining access to musical and socio-cultural understanding and to the study of transmission processes and ideologies.⁶ Ethnomusicology's earlier incarnation as comparative

³ Cook, 'Music as Performance' 211.

⁴ See, for example, Benjamin Brinner, *Knowing Music, Making Music: Javanese Gamelan and the Theory of Musical Competence and Interaction* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁵ Sarah Weiss, 'Kothong nanging kebak, Empty yet Full: Some Thoughts on Embodiment and Aesthetics in Javanese Performance,' *Asian Music* 34.2 (2003): 21–50; Elizabeth Mackinlay, 'Engaging with Theories of Dialogue and Voice: Using Bakhtin as a Framework to Understand Teaching and Learning Indigenous Australian Women's Performance,' *Research Studies in Music Education* 19 (2002): 32–45; Peter Dunbar-Hall, 'Culture, Tourism and Cultural Tourism: Boundaries and Frontiers in Performances of Balinese Music and Dance,' *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 22.2 (2001): 173–87; Peter Dunbar-Hall, 'Tradisi and turisme: Music, Dance and Cultural Transformation at the Ubud Palace, Bali, Indonesia,' *Australian Geographical Studies* 41.1 (2003): 3–16; David Harnish, 'Worlds of Wayang Sasak: Music, Performance and Negotiations of Religion and Modernity,' *Asian Music* 34.2 (2003): 91–120.

⁶ See, for example, Timothy Rice, *May it Fill your Soul: Experiencing Bulgarian Music* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1994); John Baily, 'Learning to Perform as a Research Technique in Ethnomusicology,' *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 10.2 (2001): 85–98.

musicology—with its insistence on codifying pitch and rhythmic practices, instrumental types and the roles of music—relied on performance as its primary source of information, even if the implications of performance were not deconstructed to current levels, in this way preparing the development of ethnomusicology as a research field concerned with performance. It is axiomatic that in music cultures without notation, performance and the moment of meaning creation are identical. This is in contrast to notated music cultures, where a score of a piece of music can be analysed and have meaning assigned to it in the abstract, without the presence of music as sound. Historical and analytical musicology would seem in this light to be catching up with what ethnomusicologists have known and practised for some time.

To exemplify how performance underpins research into the contextual meanings of music, the following discussion presents readings of a number of presentations of *baris*, a Balinese, *gamelan*-accompanied, male dance. Through a study of these performances and their connections to past and present understandings of Balinese dance and music, this article demonstrates how this study, which relies on performance, has developed research and interpretive methods that differ from those used principally in analytical and historical musicology. In this case, differences in audiences, performance spaces and expectations for what can be identified in the one dance uncover different meanings, demonstrating that meaning can never be unilateral. This emphasises ontological distinctions between an ethnomusicological approach to music and conventional analytical and historical ones. Ethnomusicology often relies on relational interpretations of a number of instantiations of music to uncover and interpret a range of contextualising factors influencing meaning, while in the main analytical and historical approaches seek absolute readings of music from notated sources.

The development of a range of methodologies for the study and interpretation of music through performance may represent a largely unrecognised contribution by ethnomusicology to the study of music in general. The following exemplification of method is therefore intended as a position statement. Before presenting a set of descriptions and interpretations of *baris*, the discussion requires an explanation of *baris* and a consideration of its abstracted implications within the sign-system of Balinese performing arts as represented by researchers. The descriptions of specific performances of *baris* include consideration of the expectations of audiences (both Balinese and non-Balinese), and issues of authenticity, cross-culturalism, gender, globalism and ownership, and the positioning of *baris* within Balinese aesthetics of performance and histories of descriptions of Balinese dance and music. Through these issues, individual performances are shown to adopt their own meanings which at times draw on the *topoi* of received readings of *baris* while at others they act intertextually as lenses into a range of issues through which contemporary Balinese performing arts achieve significance.

Baris: Definitions and Characteristics

The Indonesian word *baris* is defined as ‘row, line, ranks, military drill’ and subsequently, demonstrating adoption of the word into Balinese performing arts, as ‘a kind of Balinese male dance.’⁷ There are, or have been, various types of *baris* dance, some dating to medieval Balinese and Javanese court performances. De Zoete and Spies, early writers on Balinese dance and music, list twenty-one types of *baris*; more recently, Racki notes that there are

⁷John Echols and Hassan Shadily, *Kamus Indonesia Inggris* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1997) 54.

twenty-seven types, while I Wayan Dibia and Ballinger report that there are currently thirty forms in use.⁸

The consistent characteristics of *baris* are depictions in some way of a military ethos through costume (which stylises historical warrior dress), music (reliant on specific *gongan* [cyclical gong patterns] and *kendangan* [drumming]), paraphernalia (shields, spears and / or *kris* [sword / dagger]), and choreography (imitative of military marching patterns or warrior-like stance and bearing). These implications are borne out in definitions of *baris* dance by researchers. For example, Tenzer writes that '*baris* ... refers to a whole family of choreographies that portray martial and warlike characters,' while I Wayan Dibia and Ballinger define *baris* as a dance that 'shows in both abstract and realistic movements the bravery of the young warrior.'⁹ Notes provided to tourists at performances of *baris* echo these definitions:

Baris (a warrior dance): which functions both as temple ceremonial and performance.¹⁰

Baris Dance: This traditional dance is the first that boys learn. It depicts a courageous warrior preparing himself for battle. ¹¹

The marching warrior dance *Baris* is widely known ... the dance troupe tonight present the group *Baris*, with more than one dancer performing as a group of ancient warriors on the way to battle. ¹²

Baris/Warrior Dance: *Baris* is a traditional dance glorifying the manhood of the triumphant Balinese warrior. The word *baris* means a line or file, in the sense of a line of soldiers, and was the name of the warriors who fought for the kings of Bali. The dance depicts the courage and virtues of an admirable hero who is going to war.¹³

Writers classify *baris* according to its use. De Zoete and Spies provide two groupings: ritual *baris*, performed as part of religious observances, and dramatic *baris*, presented as entertainment, often as one dance among several in a concert situation or as a component of a danced drama presentation.¹⁴ Racki's classification, and that of I Wayan Dibia and Ballinger, follows that of de Zoete and Spies, except that Racki uses the Balinese terminology and classification of dance as either *wali* (sacred) or *balih-balihan* (secular)—terms that indicate where a dance can be performed: *wali* dances are presented in the most sacred parts of temples, while *balih-balihan* ones are given in outer, more public temple spaces, or in general locations outside temples.¹⁵ In this way, different meanings of performances of *baris* are made. Whatever the classification of *baris*, McPhee noted that during his time in Bali in the 1930s, *baris* dance was essential to any

⁸ Beryl De Zoete and Walter Spies, *Dance and Drama in Bali* (London: Faber, 1938); Christian Racki, *The Sacred Dances of Bali* (Denpasar: Buratwangi, 1998); I Wayan Dibia and Rucina Ballinger, *Balinese Dance, Drama and Music: A Guide to the Performing Arts of Bali* (Singapore: Periplus, 2004).

⁹ Michael Tenzer, *Balinese Music* (Singapore: Periplus, 1998) 57; I Wayan Dibia and Ballinger, *Balinese Dance* 80.

¹⁰ Mekar Sari Ladies Orchestra and Dance Troupe, promotional material.

¹¹ Sekaa Gong Semara Pegulingan Tirta Sari, Peliatan, promotional material.

¹² Sekaa Gong Jaya Swara Ubud, promotional material.

¹³ Sadha Budaya Troupe, promotional material.

¹⁴ De Zoete and Spies, *Dance and Drama in Bali*.

¹⁵ Racki, *The Sacred Dances of Bali*; I Wayan Dibia and Ballinger, *Balinese Dance*.

village festival: 'baris and *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet play) form the nucleus of the festival program,' a practice that continues to the present.¹⁶

While there are different types of *baris*, the one most likely to be seen by tourists is *Baris Tunggal* (*tunggal*, single), danced by a solo dancer and classified by Balinese as secular, or non-ritual. This form of *baris* is thought to have developed in the early twentieth century, a time of intense artistic activity in Bali and the time when Balinese *kebyar* music, the predominant style of contemporary Balinese *gamelan* music, originated.¹⁷ In this historic context, *Baris Tunggal* can be positioned as symbolic of the development of modern trends in Balinese music and dance and also representative of ways in which Balinese musicians have responded to the needs of tourism. Through its tourist contexts, it also acts as symbolic of common perceptions of Balinese culture.¹⁸ The following description of the music of *Baris Tunggal* and naming of its musical characteristics, is that given to me by the late I Wayan Gandra during lessons in Bali in 2000.

The music of *Baris Tunggal* can be divided into three sections, the third of which is a shortened repeat of the first. The middle of these three large sections can be divided into a similar three-part structure, so that this second section of *Baris Tunggal* mirrors the dance's overall structure. The opening section of *Baris Tunggal* is based on a *gilak* gong pattern of eight beats (G = *gong wadon* [large gong], P = *kempur* [medium sized gong]):

G / / / G P / P (G)

The second section, utilises first a fast, four beat *bapang* gong cycle (T = *klentong* [small gong]):

G / T / (G)

then a slow, eight-beat gong cycle called either *pelegongan* (from its use in *legong* music) or *gongan biasa* (from the Indonesian word '*biasa*,' meaning usual or normal, and referring to the use of this gong cycle in many types of music):

G / P / T / P / (G)

This second section of the overall structure of the dance concludes with a return of the inner section based on the *bapang* gong pattern. The dance concludes with the return of its opening (*gilak*) section.

Responding to these structural changes throughout *Baris Tunggal*, the *kendangan* (drumming) changes from section to section. The opening *kendangan* requires *jedugan* style played with a *panggul* (beater) in the player's right hand, the inner slow section is played in *kopiak* style, without *panggul*. In this way, the *kendangan* coincides with the character of the *gongan* in use, the *panggul* accompanied sections (during the *gilak* and *bapang gongan*) presenting a stronger

¹⁶ Colin McPhee, *Music in Bali: A Study in Form and Instrumental Organization in Balinese Orchestral Music* (New Haven: Yale UP) 11.

¹⁷ See Raden Moerdowo, *Reflections on Balinese Traditional and Modern Arts* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1983).

¹⁸ See Tenzer, *Balinese Music*.

ethos than the softer more meditative *pelegongan/gongan biasa* section requires. The overall plan can be shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Structural and musical features of *Baris Tunggal*

Section	1	2	3
<i>Gongan</i>	<i>gilak</i>	<i>bapang-pelegongan-bapang</i>	<i>gilak</i>
<i>Kendangan</i>	<i>jedugan</i>	<i>kopiak</i>	<i>jedugan</i>
Speed	fast	fast slow fast	fast

Baris Tunggal's structural and musical changes reflect/are reflected in the dancer's movements and moods. In its opening and closing sections, *Baris Tunggal* presents a warrior preparing for battle, and exhibits a warlike nature. This character of the opening section can be inferred from the use of the *gilak* gong pattern, which is often used in music of a strong nature. In the inner, slower section the dancer reflects/meditates on involvement in battle. The presence of the *pelegongan* gong pattern and softer style of drumming can reference the more delicate character of *legong* music and dance.

The micro–macrocosmic relationship of *Baris Tunggal* and its inner section references Balinese cosmology to dualistic terms, consisting of *buana alit* (literally 'small world': microcosmic) and *buana agung* ('large world': macrocosmic). In the *buana alit–buana agung* framework observable in many Balinese arts forms, humans are perceived as reflections of the universe: 'the human being is a faithful copy of the world at large' and arts representations are considered essential reflections of the cosmos.¹⁹ This level of dualism is furthered in another, more opaque one, through which day-to-day events are represented as a constant struggle between two sets of ideological forces: *sekala* (the seen, outer world of existence) and *niskala* (the unseen, inner world of spiritual powers).²⁰ Alongside the *buana alit–buana agung* framework, the *sekala–niskala* dualism is also relevant to some of the readings of *Baris Tunggal* discussed here as the dance presents physical embodiment of warrior characteristics and an inner reading of warrior ethos, these different characterisations aligned choreographically against the changes in style outlined above for the dance's musical structure. Interpretation in this way of differences between sections in the dance's musical structure as grounded in Balinese religious aesthetics provides one means of understanding performance of the dance and its music as observed event and symbolic object. In this reading, performance realises and acknowledges religious belief, and Balinese dances such as *Baris Tunggal* become 'cosmograms—representations of the construct of the universe—and thus (religious) offerings in themselves.'²¹

***Baris Tunggal*: Performances**

I turn now to a number of performances of *Baris Tunggal* observed in Bali over the period 2001 to 2005. Comparisons between performances allow the application of Schechner's idea, discussed by Cook and deriving from performance studies, that an emphasis on 'explorations of horizontal

¹⁹ Angela Hobart, Urs Ramseyer and Albert Leeman, *The Peoples of Bali* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) 101.

²⁰ Fred Eiseman, *Bali: Sekala and Niskala: Essays on Religion, Ritual and Art* (Hong Kong: Periplus, 1990); Hobart, Ramseyer and Leeman, *Peoples of Bali*; I Wayan Dibia and Ballinger, *Balinese Dance*.

²¹ David Harnish, 'Balinese Performance as Festival Offering,' *Asian Art* 4.2 (1991): 9–27; 11.

relationships among related forms rather than a searching vertically for unprovable origins' provides means to 'understand performances primarily in relation to other performances.'²²

The first example of *Baris Tunggal* is as a regular component of tourist shows in various locations in the Balinese village of Ubud. These shows occur in either the courtyard of the palace of the local royal family, in village *bale banjar* (community meeting pavilions), in front of temple façades, or at outdoor stages especially constructed for tourist performances. There are two types of tourist shows: concerts consisting of a number of unconnected dances, and *sendratari* (dance dramas with *gamelan* accompaniment) in which a complete story is acted and danced. The dance's role as entertainment during a three-day *odalan* (temple festival) at the *Pura Saraswati* (Saraswati Temple) in Ubud in April, 2003, is the second type of presentation of *Baris Tunggal* for discussion. This performance of *Baris Tunggal*, given on a platform in front of the temple facade, was by child instrumentalists and dancers, a not uncommon occurrence in Bali where the learning of traditional performing arts from an early age is encouraged and valued. In these examples, apart from playing speeds and the number of repetitions of *gongan* from performance to performance, the music of this *baris* does not change. As an objectively observed sonic event, it is clear that the same piece of music is being played and can be compared with any number of Balinese recordings of it (for example, the CDs *Bali: Gamelan and Kecak*, *Gamelan Manikasanti*, *Gamelan Semara Dana*).²³ What changes between performances are meanings that are ascribed to each performance and the ways that these meanings are constructed and implied. It is analysis of these variable factors that allows the contention that study of performance is a valid method for investigating meaning creation in music.

Figure 2. Postcard of a child *Baris Tunggal* dancer



²² Cook, 'Music as Performance' 206.

²³ *Bali: Gamelan and Kecak*, Elektra/Nonesuch CD 7559-79204-2 (1989); *Gamelan Manikasanti*, Maharini Gamelan Series (no details); *Gamelan Semara Dana*, Maharini Gamelan Series, RCD-10.

Baris Tunggal at Tourist Events

Since the 1970s, tourism that utilises presentations of dance and music in Bali has been a standard device for the generation of income, a vehicle for the preservation of Balinese performance arts, and a means through which the Indonesian government attracts tourists to Bali.²⁴ The Balinese village of Ubud is recognised as a centre of cultural tourism, with a regular program of concerts and *sendratari* every night of the week.²⁵ These tourist shows present a view of Bali as visually, aurally and culturally exotic. Through costume, story, dance, music and setting, they create and rely on illusions of 'authenticity.' These performances pose Bali as a Hindu remnant of the pre-Muslim Malay archipelago and an ornate and complex pre-modern culture surviving in the contemporary world. They reinforce tourist expectations and visions of Bali dating from the inter-war years and rely on constructions of Bali as a 'paradise';²⁶ as a society in which arts practice is a way of life, and the island which Covarrubias famously described as one where 'everybody ... seems to be an artist.'²⁷ In these tourist events, performance is manipulated to promote agendas in the definition of Balinese culture, to raise money, and to assist in keeping Balinese dance and music of the past alive.

In Ubud, nightly concerts organised for tourist consumption present a range of dance and music styles, the primary ones being *tarian lepas* (abstract dances accompanied by *gamelan*), *tarian topeng* (mask dances), *tarian kebyar* (dramatic representations in dance) and *legong* (stylised court dances of Bali's past danced by young girls). *Kecak* (a danced Ramayana story accompanied by male chanting) is also given on a weekly basis. In this setting, *Baris Tunggal* represents one of a range of Balinese performing arts in a diet calculated to provide tourists with samples of representative styles. Its male character and rhythmically strong music provide a foil to the predominantly female dances and preponderance of *legong* style music that constitute the majority of the repertoire given for tourists. This mixing of musical and choreographic types responds to the Balinese desire for life and the arts to be *ramé* (that is, busy, full, exciting) and subscribes to an expectation that music performances include contrasting styles of music; interspersion of *Baris Tunggal* in such performances provides a way of achieving this. At the same time, performance of *Baris Tunggal* allows opportunities for a range of overt cultural display: it is accompanied by *gamelan*, the music a clear example of the repetitive nature of *gongan*-dependent *gamelan* music, while the dancer's costume (a stylised military uniform, ornate helmet decorated with pearl shell, and *kris*) symbolises both the Balinese past and histories of Balinese warfare. Performances of *Baris Tunggal* in the courtyards of palaces or temples utilise these spaces to link the dance and its music to architectonic symbols of Bali as pre-colonial, royal and mystic. The image of a *Baris Tunggal* dancer is a common one on tourist paraphernalia, such as postcards and carvings, and adorns commercial packaging, demonstrating the dance's identity as a symbol of Balinese culture and its manipulation as a commodity of tourism. Calling on all of these referents, performance of *Baris Tunggal* in concerts organised for tourists is an appeal to images of Balinese tradition; it is intertextual and packages much into its instantiation.

²⁴ Adrian Vickers, *Bali: A Paradise Created* (Hong Kong: Periplus, 1989); Michel Picard, *Bali: Cultural Tourism and Touristic Culture* (Singapore: Archipelago, 1996); Dunbar-Hall, 'Tradisi and turisme.'

²⁵ Dunbar-Hall, 'Tradisi and turisme.'

²⁶ Vickers, *Bali*.

²⁷ Miguel Covarrubias, *Island of Bali* (Singapore: Periplus 1946/1973) 160.

Figure 3. Incense packet showing the figure of a *Baris Tunggal* dancer

In addition to performances of *Baris Tunggal* by adults, it is possible to see the dance performed by young boys. In one such performance given on a weekly basis by the group Chandra Wati, the accompanying *gamelan* is a *gamelan wanita* (women's *gamelan*). This brings performance of *Baris Tunggal* into the area of Balinese gender politics, with acceptance of women into previously male dominated musical settings (such as performing in a *gamelan*) becoming increasingly common. This aspect of Balinese life has been investigated by Bakan, who sees it as symptomatic of changing social roles in Indonesia and an aspect of *emansipasi*.²⁸ I Wayan Dibia and Ballinger date the entry of women into Balinese performing arts to the 1980s, noting that

before the early 1980s, one would be hard pressed to find a female *dalang* (puppeteer). The 1980s brought much change in the artistic world ... women (became) a viable creative force and female *gamelan* musicians and puppeteers are becoming more common as their new artistic roles are given more credibility.²⁹

Credibility, and debates over the acceptability of women in performing ensembles, raise more than superficial issues of stereotyping of gender roles. Women's groups are still not allowed to perform specific repertoires associated with the most sacred aspects of temple observance; female students in tertiary institutes of the arts are not expected to learn instrumental performance, but are still perceived primarily as dancers; and during the Indonesian economic crisis of the late 1990s, the women's sections of Balinese performance contests were cancelled. Despite this, membership of a women's *gamelan* carries with it a degree of desirability, and regional rivalries long associated with male *gamelans* have now become part of the growing world of *gamelan wanita*, giving the work of women *gamelan* players a significant role in Balinese cultural politics.³⁰

²⁸ Michael Bakan, *Music of Death and New Creation: Experiences in the World of Balinese Gamelan Beleganjur* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1999) 243.

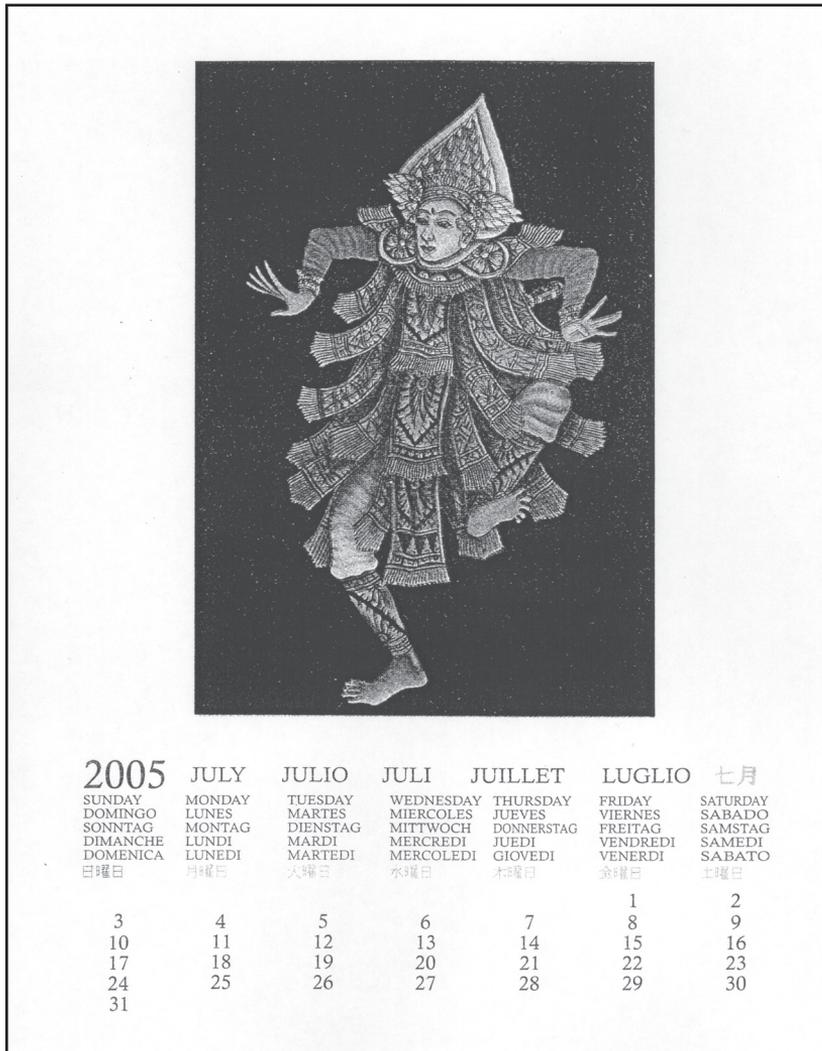
²⁹ I Wayan Dibia and Ballinger *Balinese Dance*.

³⁰ Andy McGraw, 'Playing like Men: The Cultural Politics of Women's Gamelan,' *Latitudes* 47 (2004): 12–17.



Alongside dance concerts, *sendratari* are also standard tourist entertainment in the Ubud area. These danced dramas began in 1962 with the creation in south Bali of a balletic version of a story presented with *gamelan* accompaniment.³¹ Although datable to the last few decades, *sendratari* can be likened to, and are possibly derivative of, dance dramas with *gamelan* accompaniment observed in the early twentieth century by de Zoete and Spies.³² The influence of *gambuh* dance dramas, the ‘oldest form of Balinese dance-drama ... considered to be the source of Balinese music and dance,’ can also be imputed to them.³³

Figure 4. Page from a tourist calendar with an unattributed painting of a *Baris Tunggal* dancer



³¹ Racki, *The Sacred Dances of Bali* 83

³² De Zoete and Spies, *Dance and Drama in Bali*.

³³ I Made Bandem, 'Topeng in Contemporary Bali,' *International Symposium on the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Property: Masked Performance in Asia* (Tokyo: National Research Institute of Cultural Properties, 1987) 191–208 at 199. Cited in Michael Tenzer, *Gamelan Gong Kebyar: The Art of Twentieth-century Balinese Music* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2000) 154.

In the dance dramas witnessed by de Zoete and Spies in the 1930s, separate dance movements, including *baris*, were combined to present a storyline. The appearance of *Baris Tunggal* in a contemporary *sendratari*, *The Ballet of Bimaniu*, based on an episode of the *Mahabharata*, continues this manipulation of dance for dramatic purposes. In this *sendratari*, *Baris Tunggal* is used as a symbolic device to establish the credentials of a princely character (something his *baris* costume has failed to accomplish before his performance of the dance). The program description of the plot of *The Ballet of Bimaniu* explains this:

Durga (Goddess of Death) attempts to devour Bimaniu. Due to the prince's magical powers, even Durga's attack is in vain. Durga can do nothing but listen to the young prince who reveals himself as being of the great Pandawa lineage. For this Durga wants proof and orders Bimaniu to dance. After Bimaniu has danced, the Goddess of Death, Durga, knows his claim to be true.³⁴

In his analysis of twentieth-century Balinese music, Tenzer reads this repertoire as a complex of implication-rich stylistic markers through which a 'specific referentiality of topics' contributes to 'the associations carried by (a piece of music).'³⁵ There is an implication that this aspect of Balinese music is proactively utilised by Balinese musicians within a multivalent sign system in the creation of new dances and pieces of music. In *Baris Tunggal*, the use of *gongan gilak* can infer a masculine, warrior-like nature from the use of that *gongan* in *beleganjur*, a type of military music from pre-colonial Balinese courts. This impression is furthered by the possibility that the word *gilak* is cognate with the Indonesian word *galak*, meaning 'fierce, vicious.'³⁶ This *gongan* also underpins some temple music, thus gaining a degree of religious association. The expectation of some form of *baris* at *ngaben* (cremation rites) and during *odalan* (temple anniversary / festival) adds to the dance's sacred meanings. Tenzer labels this aspect of Balinese music as an 'intertextual pathway' explaining it in the following way:

character topics originate in the family of melodies and their affiliated colotomic meters, melodic elaborations, and drumming that are used to accompany stock character types in dance and theatre music. Some character topics may be traced to specific tunes and dances that are widely known and easily identifiable for Balinese, or they may evoke features of a more generalized type, and are best described as being 'in the style of' some well-known dance (*Baris* or *Gabor*, for example) ...³⁷

providing a way of reading performance of *Baris Tunggal* as a characterising element in *The Ballet of Bimaniu*.

Baris at odalan

The Balinese Hindu religion is typified by Clifford Geertz as a religion of orthopraxy (observance of events) rather than orthodoxy (stated beliefs).³⁸ It includes life-cycle celebrations and temple-related events, all of which require dance and music for their proper implementation: 'nearly all traditional Balinese performing arts are ultimately rooted in religion and are ascribed functions

³⁴ Panca Artha Troupe, promotional material.

³⁵ Tenzer, *Balinese Music* 155.

³⁶ Echols and Shadily, *Kamus Indonesia Inggris* 168

³⁷ Tenzer, *Balinese Music* 164.

³⁸ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 170–89.

relating to religious practices ... even those seemingly non-religious in character, are frequently presented at festivals to enhance the event's ritual power.³⁹ *Odalan*, planned according to the Balinese 210-day calendar, are among the most significant actualisations of Balinese religion. At *odalan*, gods visit temples where they are honoured and entertained with dance and music that simultaneously entertain human attendees. As Harnish notes, through their symbolisation of the principal tenets of Balinese religious belief, performances of such dances and music can be read as cosmograms. They provide symbolic means for making the link between *sekala* and *niskala* evident, and are a process for keeping them in balance: the act of performing brings abstractions of Balinese religion into observable and comprehensible events.

The inclusion of specific music types and repertoires is essential to *odalan*. Reciprocally, as components of *odalan* dance and music acquire meaning(s) through their location within a Balinese arts aesthetic, the result is a confluence of meanings resulting from the the influences of *desa* (place), *kala* (time) and *patra* (context). Herbst explains this as:

the concept of *desa kala patra* is essential to Balinese artists ... [it is] a way of putting human activity into the context of the world and nature; a way of interacting with forces greater than human ... *desa kala patra* is where things come from, where meaning and life-forces are manifested.⁴⁰

Baris Tunggal, performed at the *odalan* of *Pura Saraswati* in April, 2003, exemplifies these precepts of the significances of dance and music at a temple festival. In the *sekala-niskala* dualism, this dance entertains visiting deities and is an offering to them (*niskala*: unseen) while it simultaneously amuses their earthly counterparts (*sekala*: seen). Its representation of a warrior (*sekala*) provides a degree of protection towards the gods (*niskala*). While carrying levels of sacred implication in these ways, according to Balinese ways of deciding the sacred or non-sacred significance of dances and music, through its appearance outside the temple façade, this performance of *Baris Tunggal* is defined, in Balinese terms, as *balih-balihan* (in opposition to *wali*), that is, secular in intent. Secular in this case does not include non-Balinese observers unless they are prepared to wear *pakain adat* (traditional temple dress) to gain entry to the performance space. By adopting *pakain adat*, non-Balinese indicate their respect for Balinese religious beliefs and for the enactment of them at a time of heightened religious awareness. Performance of *Baris Tunggal* at this *odalan*, therefore, imposes expectations on intending audience members and implicates them in ways of understanding some of the significances of the dance and its music.

At this *odalan*, *Baris Tunggal* was given three times in immediate succession—first by a solo dancer in his late teens, second by two dancers in their mid teens (each danced *Baris Tunggal* individually on opposite sides of the stage), and finally by a child. Accompaniment was provided by a *gamelan* of male children which emphasises the Balinese wish to perpetuate traditional music and dance through programs for teaching them to children. While adhering to a not uncommon event in Balinese performing arts and thus reinforcing training of children for the purpose of perpetuating Balinese dance and music, performance of *Baris Tunggal* by children specifically references current and past aspects of Balinese performing arts, especially in the region around Ubud.

³⁹ Harnish, 'Balinese Performance' 9.

⁴⁰ Edward Herbst, *Voices in Bali: Energies and Perceptions in Vocal Music and Dance Theatre* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1997) 1.

One of the styles of dance most often presented for tourists in Bali is *legong*, performed by young female dancers. *Legong* originated in the nineteenth century in the Ubud area, identifying this region as historically proactive in the training of children as dancers. Child performances of *Baris Tunggal* resonate with this aspect of the dance history of this village. At the same time, performances by children relate to current, local agendas to teach dance and *gamelan* to children as a means of cultural continuity. These agendas are made explicit in various ways in the Ubud area. Notices intended for tourists indicate that 'every Sunday and Tuesday the Ubud children having [*sic*] performances art lesson at day time organized by Tedung Agung Performance Institution,'⁴¹ while the Agung Rai Museum of Art (ARMA), on the cusp between Ubud and its neighbouring village, Peliatan, actively promotes the teaching of Balinese dance and music to children through its Educational and Cultural Preservation Program. This provides 'opportunities, free of charge, for Balinese children to become actively involved in cultural programs of classical dance, *gamelan* and drawing'⁴² and is described by ARMA in the following way:

ARMA has developed links with local schools to encourage extra-curricular programs. It provides space and the teachers who train the children in classical forms of dance which might otherwise disappear. Peliatan has been famous for Balinese dance for decades, and the classes at ARMA are provided to sustain that internationally recognised excellence. Older dancers are frequently brought in to teach the teachers who then pass the skills on to the young children ... though tourism continues to increase, the arts of Bali will also continue thriving into the next century.⁴³

In the context of its use to teach children, *Baris Tunggal* has another role—as a pedagogic medium it is taught to young boys as a compendium of the dance moves, interpretation of music and ability to interact with a *gamelan* required for male dance in general. As with *Baris Tunggal* as a touristic object, performance of it by children at an *odalan* is multivalent in the ways it can be read. On another level, conversations with local musicians in the Ubud area in the period after the 12 October 2002 terrorist bombings of nightclubs in the Kuta district indicated that increased activity in the teaching and performance of dances such as *Baris Tunggal* especially to and by children was a reaction to the bombings and a way of re-establishing the strength of Balinese culture which to these musicians was seen as having declined through allowing Western commodification of Bali as a tourist destination to occur.

Conclusion

The different contexts of performances of *Baris Tunggal* for tourists and those for Balinese people attending a religious event can be used to emphasise the idea that each performance—of what is ostensibly the same piece of music—assumes its own meanings. In the case of tourist performances, *Baris Tunggal* gains meaning from its use to feed into expectations and images of Bali as an artistic 'paradise' where vestiges of pre-colonial and early to mid-twentieth century views of Bali are perpetuated. Used at an *odalan*, however, religious implications of the dance as it appeals to Balinese people's religious aesthetics become a focus for the dance's ability to acquire meaning.

⁴¹ Panca Artha Troupe, promotional material.

⁴² ARMA, promotional material.

⁴³ ARMA, promotional material.

Like all performance, the presentations of *Baris Tunggal* discussed here draw attention to themselves through ways in which they are marked off from quotidian activity. These markers are both observable (the formalised playing of music; costume; stylised movement; the setting of specific times for events) and abstract (implications of architectural settings, gender, age and cultural background of performers; roles between teachers and students in learning situations; intentions of performers and audiences). My readings of *Baris Tunggal* pick up on these markers to interpret presentations of the dance and its music in a number of ways beyond those assigned to the dance by researchers who read its musical characteristics as given symbolic forms: sign of the Balinese past, tourist commodity, religious artefact, intercultural object, pedagogic medium, embodiment of a repertoire, site of gender politics, symbol of local re-Balinisation of culture, and demonstration of belief in the effectiveness of learning to perform Balinese music. These 'public' meanings of *Baris Tunggal* exist alongside others that occur during performance and arise from relationships between performers as members of ensembles, and from those between performers and the music/movement they embody.

Like much music, especially that in non-notated repertoires, *Baris Tunggal* is a set of ideas, both in the aesthetic realm and in the objectifiable one of musical materials. Like other symbols, this set of ideas has an endless potential to adopt meanings. What those meanings will be is not confirmed until the moment of realisation. Even then, realisations can change their meanings over time and as the medium of their presentation varies; performance becomes a way of assigning meaning and a site of ongoing changes of meaning. For ethnomusicologists, investigating a range of meanings for musical works by addressing performances of them is not an innovation. It emphasises the intention of ethnomusicology to go beyond the assigning of absolute meanings and provides a method for unpacking the processes through which meanings are assigned and interpreted.

Acknowledgements

My understandings of Balinese dance and music have been greatly assisted by I Wayan Gandra, I Wayan Tusti Adnyana, Doug Myers, Vi King Lim, I Nyoman Mudana, Ni Nyoman Sumerti, Cokorda Raka Swastika, Cokorda Sri Agung, Gary Watson and Tabitha Williams.