



**TAPS MASTER CLASS RESOURCE PACK: Balinese Performing Arts**  
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## **Master Class: Balinese Performing Arts by Rucina Balingier and Wayne Dibia**

### **Bali- a cultural area**

Bali is a small Island measuring 50 x 90 miles just east of Java with unique and complex living cultural traditions. Inhabited by nearly four million people most of whom are Hindu, Bali been considered as one of the largest Hindu communities outside India. Until the end of Nineteenth century Bali was divided into several small kingdoms, or Negara (Geertz 1980) each kingdom develops its own arts.

### **Introduction**

The performing arts of Bali are rich, vast and complex. Virtually every form of music, dance, drama, and shadow puppetry in Bali has its origin as a function for ritual, if not a ritual in itself.

Every art form integrates complex values of Balinese Hindu culture, its performance both aims to please deities and gods (of the invisible world or *niskala*) as well as to entertain human audience (of the visible world or *sekala*).

It is animated by complex cultural values encompassing both the indigenous (ancestral and nature worship) and the Javanese Hindu (Shivaism) cultural traditions. Majapahit kingdom in 14<sup>th</sup> century in Java.

All forms of Balinese arts integrate the artistic expression of the past and the present. The arts express the values that Balinese hold dear, such as balance and harmony.

Taksu, the spiritual power or charisma, is the divine energy that brings all art forms alive on stage so that it mesmerizes both the human and divine spectators.

Trance is an integral part of ritual, showing that the spirits are present.

### **The nature of Balinese performing arts**

It is controlled by different social organizations, such as, clan or *dadia*, hamlet or *banjar*, village or *desa*, social group organization or *sekaa*, and today private art studios or *sanggar* and government institutions.

### **Performing arts in Balinese tradition**

- Essential parts of the Hindu-Bali religious ceremonies- Wali, Be Bali, Balih Balihan based on “sacredness of space”
- Symbol of cultural pride of the local people; an important means for social education and a source of entertainment

### **The production of performing arts in Bali**

- Through traditional system- Sekaa, Banjar, Desa
- Through modern system- arts school, government offices, private organization

## The aesthetic nature of Balinese performing art

- Integrating all elements (music, dance, drama): all forms include gamelan music, dance and acting, and drama or story telling
- Changing aesthetic emphasis from music and dance, to more story telling

## Music

- **Vocal and Instrumental**

Operates in two scales:

Selendro- four and five tones with whole step and minor third intervals

Pelog- four, five and seven tones with half step and major thirds

- **Vocal Music**

Children/ folk songs (Sekar Rare), Tembang Macapat (Sekar Alit), Kidung, Malat (Sekar Madya), Seloka and Kakawin (Sekar Agung)

- **Instrumental Music**

Sizes of the ensembles: small (barungan alit): up to 8-9 musicians; medium (barungan mada): from 10 to 25 musicians; and large (barungan ageng): more than 25 musicians

- **Tuning system**

ngumbang-ngisep, lanang-wadon

- **Playing technique**

Simple in unison or klenyongan, interlocking (kotekan) of two parts: down or on beat (polos) and up beat (sangsih); of three parts: polos, sangsih, and in between part (sanglot)

- **Roles and functions of instruments**

Colotomic instruments:

Kajar- the time keeper

Gong- to mark the end of a musical phrase

- **Melodic Instruments**

Gangsa Pemade (middle size ten keys instruments) and Gangsa Kantilan (small size ten keys instruments)

- **Dynamic and Rhythmic controller**

Kendang (two headed horizontal drum) and Ceng-ceng (the cymbal)

- **Important Gamelan**

Selonding, Gambang, Gaguntangan, Gender Wayang, Gong Gede, Semar Pagulingan, , Angklung, Balaganjur, Gong Kebyar, Jegog, Joged Bumbung

## Dance

- Vertical lines/space: tri angga (top, middle, bottom)
- Horizontal line/space: rwa bhineda (right and left)
- Character types: strong (keras) and refined (alus)
- Gender types: male (mwani), female (eluh), and in between type (bebancihan)
- Choreography: solo, duet, small group, and dance drama
- Movements: non-locomotive or axial movements (agem), locomotive movement (tandang), transitional movements (tangkis), and expressive movement (tangkep)
- Major Forms: Rejang, Baris, Legong Keraton, Kebyar, and Kecak

## Theatre

- Using different stories: Ramayana, Mahabharata, Panji Romance, Balinese Chronicles, Balinese Tales
- Combining tragedy and comedy- tragicomedy
- Acted by human actors and puppets
- Using masks and without masks
- Major forms: Gambuh, Barong, Topeng, Arja, Calonarang, Wayang Kulit, Wayang Wong.

## Balinese performing arts in the past

- Art and cultural forms were presented with high devotion to God and deities, as a form of social and religious obligation
- Religious (and customarily) events like odalan were the main source of inspiration of art in Bali
- Every artist aimed at presenting their best art form to Gods and deities, as well as to the community in the spirit of ngayah (free of charge performance)
- Art and cultural transmission took place within informal setting (private house, banjar hall, etc) – family and village based training
- Simplicity became the key word for the artistic activity
- Male members dominated most art activities
- Local artistic styles flourished

## Balinese performing arts at the present

- The Balinese continue to perform their art and cultural forms with high devotion to God and deities, and as a form of social and religious obligation
- Secular festivals, like Bali Arts Festival/Pesta Kesenian Bali (PKB), touristic performance, organized by both the private sector as well as government offices, become the most important source of inspiration for creating art
- More and more artists present their best art form to please dignitaries, government officials, sponsors, and paying audience on the spirit of mabayah (paid performance)

- Art and cultural transmission take place within formal settings (schools and government offices)- schools based training
- Glamour performance, using different kinds of spectacles, has become a new model
- Women have more space and room to participate in art and cultural activities
- Local styles have gradually merged into one standard style

## **Conclusion**

During the last three decades, the performing arts of Bali have changed significantly. The change is a result of the shifting orientation and goals of the performing arts activities from ritual to social and commercial, from communal to individual, from educating to entertaining.

All of these may indicate the process of secularization in Balinese arts and culture.

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