

## INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY IN GAMELAN MANDOLIN

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### ABSTRACT

Gamelan Mandolin is a type of traditional Balinese music that is played by plucking. The Mandolin gamelan, which is thought to have originated from China, is still preserved by the people of Pupuan Village, Tabanan. One form of application of creativity and innovation in the world of music is in the development of the mandolin gamelan. Gamelan mandolin is a form of musical experiment that combines Balinese gamelan instruments with the mandolin, a musical instrument originating from China. In the creation process, the mandolin gamelan presents new challenges in terms of playing techniques, harmony and timbre which are different from gamelan in general. This article aims to examine the creativity of musicians in designing and processing gamelan mandolin instruments, as well as how these innovations have had an impact on the development of traditional and contemporary Balinese music. Using a composition and performance analysis approach, this research shows that the mandolin gamelan is not just a musical experiment, but also a means of enriching the Indonesian musical repertoire through mixing different cultural elements. Through creativity and innovation in the development of the mandolin gamelan, space is created for the evolution of traditional music that remains relevant amidst global musical developments.

### KEYWORDS

Creativity, Innovation,  
Gamelan Mandolin



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## Introduction

Gamelan Mandolin is traditional music that is classified into the chordophone class which is played by plucking. The physical shape of the Mandolin instrument is a rectangular box, using strings with a tuning system like a guitar that can be adjusted high and low. There are several plucked instruments that are allied and work similar to Mandolin instruments, spread in several regions in Indonesia such as Penting in Karangasem, Kecapi in West Java, Sape and Sampek in Kalimantan, Sasando in East Nusa Tenggara, Celempung in Central Java, and Kulcapi in Batak Karo. Barungan Gamelan Mandolin, in one unit consists of several Mandolin instruments plus other instruments such as kendang, cengceng, kajar, suling jublag, and gong.

Barungan Gamelan Mandolin in Pupuan Village, Tabanan has a form, presentation system, repertoire, and performance structure in accordance with the culture of the people in Pupuan Village. It can be seen from the way the local community performs

the Mandolin Gamelan. They often use Gamelan Mandolin to enliven important religious events, traditional events of the local community, as well as aesthetic presentations. This means that the Mandolin Gamelan, which is believed to have originated from China, has been considered part of their cultural traditions.

Traditional arts in Balinese life are not immune to the influence of global culture. This will have an impact on the growth, development and progress of these traditional arts. The endless creativity of Balinese artists has led to various changes in the field of performing arts. Especially in the field of music, changes do not only touch the outer aspects such as form and appearance, but have entered the content aspect or musical ideas[1]. Related to this, Gamelan Mandolin is one of the gamelan that has made many changes related to form, content, presentation, and musical ideas. Innovation and creativity carried out in Gamelan Mandolin involves experimenting with musical forms, creating new compositions, using technology, and modifying instruments.

## Method

Research is a scientific activity that is planned and carried out systematically, rationally and directed to answer curiosity based on data collected methodologically [2]. This research uses qualitative methods to obtain valid or reliable data. According to Moeleong [3] qualitative research is research that intends to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, etc. holistically, and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language, in a special natural context and by utilizing various natural methods. Qualitative research is a type of research whose findings are not obtained through statistical procedures or other forms of calculation and aims to reveal symptoms in a contextual holistic manner through data collection from natural settings by utilizing the researcher as the key instrument with the data source is primary and secondary data.

Data collection is the most important stage in a research process to obtain all forms of valid information about the research target. The main data of this study were obtained through observation, which is a form of data collection technique through systematic observation and recording of a symptom that appears on the object of research [4]. This method is done so that researchers can get a clear picture of the object of research. The task of an observer is to find out or find information about the object under study, not only through informants but also through people who know about the object under study. The author's personal experience as a person born and raised in a rural community who sees, feels, and experiences the reality that occurs in the community is very valuable data for the benefit of this writing.

The discussion in this paper is carried out using qualitative methods analyzed in the perspective of ethnomusicology. Gamelan Mandolin as the material object in this research is studied based on the ethnomusicology perspective related to the innovation

and creativity of Gamelan Mandolin itself in the life of the people in Pupuan Village. The data sources of this research are Gamelan Mandolin itself, Gamelan Mandolin players, artists, leaders, cultural experts, and related communities selected based on purposive sampling and snowball. All data collected through observation, interviews, document studies, and literature studies were analyzed using creativity theory, ethnomusical theory, and aesthetic theory.

Besides observation, in collecting data in the field, interviews were also conducted with selected informants or resource persons [5]. Interview is a method of extracting information through direct conversation between researchers and participants. Interviews were conducted with selected resource persons who could be trusted for their information in accordance with the research needs. Literature study in the form of printed books, research reports, theses, theses, dissertations, journal articles containing information related to this research.

## Discussion

Gamelan Mandolin in Pupuan Village has recently experienced very rapid development and progress. Its development can be seen from various aspects, for example, the frequent offers of performances and the many innovations and creativity carried out by supporting artists. This is inseparable from the creativity of supporting artists, experience gained from artistic activities, and information that is very easily accessed through various existing media. This situation is very possible especially since the supporting artists of Gamelan Mandolin are very active and enthusiastic in preserving and developing their art. The freedom to express their ideas and talents through art has resulted in many new works appearing in the world of Balinese Karawitan art. This is in line with what is stated by [1] that, the growing freedom of creativity among artists causes the world of Balinese music creation to develop rapidly and quickly.

The presentation of Gamelan Mandolin in the Balinese performing arts scene is familiar to the Balinese people. The traditional and conventional presentation usually plays instrumental music such as gending rerejangan, pangecet, tabuh telu, and so on. The Mandolin position is placed in the front row of three Mandolins placed on a small table with a size of 60 x 30 cm with a table height of approximately 30 cm. The kajar, drum, cengceng, and suling are placed in the back row. At the very back are two jublag instruments, kemong and gong pulu. This arrangement of instruments is very common in Gamelan Mandolin groups with the aim of facilitating coordination between musicians. The Mandolin instrument is deliberately placed at the front to show that the Mandolin instrument is the main instrument in this gamelan group. The traditional presentation can be seen as shown below.

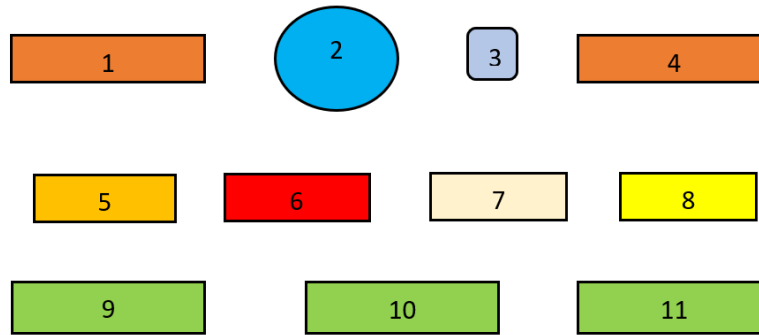


Figure1. Gamelan Mandolin presentation

Image Description:

1. Jublag
2. Gong Pulu
3. Kemong
4. Jublag
5. Flute
6. Kendang
7. Kajar
8. Cengceng
9. Mandolin
10. Mandolin
11. Mandolin

Instrument positioning is important in a musical performance. In the presentation of Mandolin Bungsil Gading instruments in Pupuan Tabanan Village, the instrument settings do not have too far distance because during the presentation of communication between musicians is important to be able to hear other instruments and to facilitate coordination. Setting instruments like this is not standardized, because every performance often gets a narrow place. Therefore, the placement of instruments in certain situations is adjusted to the available space at that time. Sometimes in certain situations the Mandolin instrument is not placed on the table provided, but is held on the legs with the position of the player sitting cross-legged. In the position of the Mandolin using the table as a place to play it, the position of the Mandolin is placed parallel to the table with the position of the player behind it. But when the Mandolin is held on the legs with the position of the player sitting cross-legged (mesila), the position of the Mandolin head is placed lower than the body. This position is done to make it easier to pluck the strings when playing it.

### 1. Innovation

The substance of innovation is to make changes or introduce something new that can be convincing and has use value that is oriented towards renewal or change. The product of innovation in art is new, original, and different from something that has been commonly enjoyed. In addition to having the value of novelty and originality, innovative works can also be observed from their quality which concerns unity,

complexity, and strength or attractiveness. [6]states that the reality of artists in innovating is not only oriented to the awareness of past and present traditions, but also adopts modern thoughts that are more rational. The implementation is not only at the ideational level of the creative process but also at the level of conception, and musical elements and often even at the level of collaboration of traditional and modern instruments. In other words, the combination of work texts not only renews the traditional work itself with its local knowledge but is also open to external influences for its development.

Innovation in the world of karawitan has been a long time coming. The artist's eagerness in realizing his new ideas can be studied from various other possibilities carried out both at the level of instruments or ensembles, as well as the level of musical language resulting from the exploration of new techniques in the medium of expression. [7]in his writing states that during The First International Gamelan Festival in Vancouver in 1986, there were at least 6 (six) gamelan groups that had innovated according to their compositional goals. The six groups are 1) Groups that use traditional gamelan to play traditional gamelan songs such as gamelan Sekar Jaya, gamelan Gita Sari, Bard College, etc: 2) Groups that use traditional gamelan to play new compositions based on contemporary western music by taking the characteristics of gamelan patterns such as the concept of colotomic structure. These groups are Dharma Budaya Osaka, gamelan Son of Lion New York, and Galak Tika Boston; 3) Groups that use new instruments adapted from gamelan to play contemporary music compositions based on traditional gamelan patterns such as gamelan Si Betty and San Jose State University; 4) Groups that use new instruments modeled after gamelan to play contemporary compositions based on contemporary western music, such as gamelan Pacifica of Seattle, The Berkeley Gamelan, and The Bay Area New Gamelan; 5) Groups that use any sound-producing instrument to play avant-garde music such as the Banjar Grupe of Berlin, Germany; and 6) Groups that use western instruments (Symphony Orchestra) to play compositions based on gamelan forms and colors as demonstrated by Claude Debussy, Colin Mc Phee and Jose Evangelista. In line with this grouping, the innovations built by Gamelan Mandolin in Pupuan Village can be categorized into three levels, namely a) old Mandolin gamelan with old musical language, b) new Mandolin gamelan with old musical forms, and c) new Mandolin gamelan with new musical forms.

Gamelan Mandolin, which is classified as a new class of gamelan in its development, is inseparable from the influences that accompany it. Since the beginning of its development, which in fact is an outside culture that enters and is well accepted as a traditional art and blends with the lives of the Pupuan people, it has always innovated by incorporating traditional musical elements that exist in the Pupuan community. At the beginning of the formation of the Mandolin sekaa in Pupuan Village, the originator did not think about what the art was made for. But as the development and

advancement of the arts in this area, inevitably also impacted on the development of Gamelan Mandolin itself. Mandolin, which from the beginning only consisted of a collection of several Mandolin instruments, was gradually added by borrowing several Balinese gamelan instruments such as kendang, cengceng kecek, kajar, suling, gong pulu and other instruments finally merged with the naming of Gamelan Mandolin.

The next phase of development is thanks to the experience of young artists in Pupuan Village who are increasingly advanced and many have received education in the world of art, increasingly challenged to develop Mandolin Gamelan even more advanced than in previous years. As told by I Made Ardana as the head of the Mandolin group in Pupuan Village in an interview conducted at his home on Saturday, August 13, 2022 said the following.

“In the past, Mandolin instruments were initially only used as illustrative music by adding and utilizing traditional instruments around us, but now we feel proud because it turns out that Mandolin can be developed even better by making innovations in various ways. One of the innovations we did was to reconstruct the old instrument and developed by adding several features such as spools, loudspeakers and sound amplifiers like in guitar instruments whose sound strength can be adjusted. Besides that, we also added some western instruments such as keyboards and guitars, other ethnic instruments such as jimbe and some other percussion instruments. We are always innovating to find new possibilities that can be incorporated into this gamelan Mandolin in addition to the traditional musical elements that already exist.”

Based on this statement, Gamelan Mandolin has innovated and developed in a more advanced direction along with the development of arts in Pupuan Village. Innovation is not only done at the level of instrument form but also in the presentation and composition of the songs played.



Figure 2. One form of Gamelan Mandolin presentation innovation

The essence of innovation in art is renewal. If in a creativity it is only a repetition according to [8] it is not innovation but production. Thus Gamelan Mandolin in its development has made innovations in various fields, especially at the level of instrument form, presentation system and composition of songs.



Based on the description previously presented, Gamelan Mandolin in Pupuan Village can be seen in several forms, namely instrument form, ensemble form, instrumentation, presentation system, development, creativity, and innovation. Mandolin instrument form is a traditional stringed instrument that uses strings, played by plucking using the right hand, and the left hand to press the tone button, similar to playing a guitar. The barrel used is the seven-tone pelog barrel. Based on the classification of Balinese Karawitan, Mandolin is included in the chordophone class. In one unit, it is called Gamelan Mandolin which consists of several instruments including: three Mandolins, two drums kerumpungan and or kendang bebarongan, two to four large and small flutes, one cengceng kecek, one kemong, one kajar, one gong pulu, and two tungguh jublag.

The description above is in accordance with ethnomusical theory that in order to understand the music of an ethnic group, in addition to studying the music itself structurally, the socio-culture of the community must also be observed. This is because sound systems always have a structure that must be seen as a product of the behavior that produces them. Behavior in this case is the physical, social, verbal, and learning aspects that arise from the underlying conceptualization. The concept of music, therefore, cannot exist without behavior, and without behavior musical sounds cannot be produced. This simple idea has one key implication that music cannot be understood by studying musical sounds alone. [9] also said that the sound of music as a human product cannot be separated from the reality of its environment which has objectivity in the music itself. Gamelan Mandolin as a local cultural product which is the result of diffusion from outside cultures is well received by the Pupuan community as part of its culture. Of course in its development it is inseparable from the social situation that exists in society. The aspects and elements of the formation of Gamelan Mandolin are so thick with the traditions that exist in Pupuan Village. Likewise, the existence of Gamelan Mandolin will not exist in Pupuan Village without the behavior of the people who support the existence of these arts.

The presentation of Gamelan Mandolin is very flexible in accordance with the place, and its designation. Traditionally, in playing instrumental music, the Mandolin is placed in the front row of three Mandolins placed on a small table measuring 60 x 30 cm with a table height of approximately 30 cm. The kajar, drum, cengceng, and suling were placed in the back row. At the back of the row were two jublag instruments, a kemong, and a gong pulu.

Along with the times Gamelan Mandolin also experienced development. Its development includes all aspects such as instrument form, presentation system, repertoire, composition, and instrumentation. Creativity and innovation in Gamelan Mandolin are not only at the level of instrument forms and structures, but also in the presentation, repertoire, and composition of the songs played.

Referring to Baudrillard's thoughts as quoted by Piliang, it is argued that there are three sign relations in the art discourse of various eras, namely (1) classical aesthetics, namely works of art whose principle form is displayed in accordance with their original meaning (form follows meaning), (2) modern aesthetics is a work of art that displays its work with principles in accordance with its current function (form follows function), and (3) postmodern aesthetics is a work of art whose principle form is presented in accordance with the current fun / fashion (form follows fun)[10]. When associated with the three principles in aesthetic theory, Gamelan Mandolin belongs to modern aesthetics because the elements of musicality contained in it are elements of traditional art concepts that are harmonious, balanced, modern but contextual. This means that although Gamelan Mandolin has adopted many elements of new musicality, the presentation seems to maintain the ethnic and contextual concepts. This can be seen from the way of presentation, the form of instruments, and the composition of the songs performed.

## 2. Creativity

Creativity is a person's ability to produce something new, both in the form of ideas and real work, which is relatively different from what has existed before. Something that is created becomes the starting point of a new development, something new, which can be genetically psychological, namely a new psychic birth that can refresh life[11]. If the range of influence due to the discovery is very widespread and very deep, then the creator can be considered a successful person. Etymologically, creativity comes from the word Creativity (English) which means the ability to create or inventiveness[12]. But literally or based on the context of the sentence, creativity can be interpreted as a matter of creating or a matter of creation based on creative concepts and traits. Determining the criteria for creativity involves three dimensions, namely process, person, and creative product. By using the creative process as a criterion of creativity, any product resulting from the process is considered a creative product and the person is called a creative person[12]. Based on factor analysis, Guilford (1963) [12] found that there are five traits that characterize creative thinking ability, namely fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration, and redefinition. Creative artists always have many ideas, ideas, and actions by using various approaches in their work. The results of the works made always have different things according to the ideas, concepts, and ideas they make. As is the case with Mandolin artists in Pupuan who are always creative in creating, innovating forms of performance that always have a new vision and innovation so as to bring up Gamelan Mandolin as a quality product and can produce works that can be enjoyed both by the supporting community and the wider community.

Gamelan Mandolin as an art product based on a sense of sincerity and high devotion and curiosity of the artists, so that high creative power efforts arise, so that it can



produce Gamelan Mandolin products such as what is inherited today. As told by a young Mandolin activist artist I Kadek Swartana who was interviewed at his home in Banjar Kayu Padi Pupuan on Sunday, September 4, 2022 said as follows.

“...Since the introduction of the Mandolin instrument by the Pupuan community around the 1930s, its development was very rapid and could even be sold to various regions in Bali such as Klungkung, Karangasem (Wangsean), and others. But along with the development of our time around 1965 the development of Mandolin in Pupuan began to fade, this is due to the G 30 S which also affected some community activities. Then on the initiative of I Made Wiartawan and other young artists around 2010 Mandolin in Pupuan was resurrected with new nuances. The addition of instruments was done without reducing the essence of the art. Restoration and reconstruction were carried out on this Mandolin instrument so as to achieve perfection in accordance with the times and technology at this time. Thanks to the high creativity of the young Mandolin activists, this art revived from its dimness. Instruments that have long been reconstructed and developed again so that they are attractive in terms of acoustics and in terms of appearance “.

The creativity of Pupuan young artists in reviving Gamelan Mandolin is not only done in the addition of instruments, but also by processing the shape of the instrument, the layout of the tone, the materials used, the addition of other instruments, and the acoustic arrangement. The form of the instrument which was originally very simple which could only produce sound, has now been developed by beautifying the appearance by providing carved decorations, providing colors with painting tailored to the tastes of the artist, and modifying the shape to make it elegant and attractive.

Lately, the performance of a performance art is not only seen in terms of the performance, but has begun to penetrate the issue of appearance. Apart from being the focus of the audience's attention, there is a certain idealism that develops among the artists themselves. Especially in the presentation that only presents instrumental music. This can be seen in various performances at the Bali Arts Festival held every year, especially during the Gong Kebyar parade. The glamorous performance is very apparent in this performance. It turns out that the impact of the implementation of the Bali Arts Festival also affects other arts in the community including Gamelan Mandolin itself. As told by I Made Rustika as a Mandolin performer artist from Pupuan Village who was interviewed on Saturday, October 22, 2022 said the following.

“The initial development of this Mandolin is only a very simple instrument only Mandolin instruments without any additional instruments. The performance was very simple done in the homes of people who when they have a celebration they consider this Mandolin as naur sesangi (paying vows). Along with the times and thanks to the creativity of friends who are very enthusiastic about this Mandolin finally developed little by little by making changes in various aspects. I think the performance at the Bali Arts Festival really brought a positive impact and impact on the arts in the community. Many ideas can be adopted and developed in the community, especially in the form of Mandolin in Pupuan Village, for example the form of instruments, presentation, gending-gending, and costumes used “.

Noting the two interviews above, it indicates that the development of Gamelan Mandolin in Pupuan Village is inseparable from the creativity of the artists who always work and are creative to present new things by looking at developments in the

performing arts in society. Creativity is not only done at the level of presentation form, but also in the form of tools, acoustics/soundstage, and appearance. The emergence of creativity does not only come from itself but can also be stimulated by the environment. As stated by [12] that creativity develops thanks to a series of social interaction processes of individuals with their creative potential influencing and being influenced by the socio-cultural environment in which they live. Individuals and society are never in a vacuum of change. Therefore, creativity is an individual phenomenon as well as a collective socio-cultural phenomenon. A person's creativity does not take place in a vacuum, but is preceded by the results of the creativity of those who worked before.

## Conclusion

Gamelan Mandolin was born from the spirit, needs, and demands of the creativity of its supporting artists to create new, more innovative music, following the demands and development of art according to the times. The persistence and tenacity of young artists in Pupuan Village are able to present new nuances with Gamelan Mandolin media so as to enrich the repertoire of music and raise the potential of art in Pupuan Village.

The creativity and development of Gamelan Mandolin does not leave existing traditions but develops with innovative concepts and innovations. Although globalization can potentially destroy local culture, Gamelan Mandolin can survive well and even experience development. In its development, Gamelan Mandolin can show its aesthetic communication through various cultural events. This shows that although on the one hand globalization has led to transnationalization, Gamelan Mandolin which is a product of locality and ethnicity can also develop well.

Mandolin since its birth is a home music instrument that is played in people's homes while resting in the afternoon or at leisure after work. Mandolin which is in fact as personal entertainment, has now developed into an adaptive aesthetic presentation art, both in local and global contexts. Along with the times Gamelan Mandolin also experienced development. Its development includes all aspects such as instrument form, presentation system, repertoire, composition, and instrumentation. Creativity and innovation in Gamelan Mandolin are not only at the level of instrument forms and structures, but also in the presentation, repertoire, and composition of the songs played.

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