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Ethnopedagogy: Culturally Contextualised Learning and Teaching as an Agent of Change

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Ethnopedagogy: Culturally Contextualised Learning and Teaching as an Agent of Change

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> *You can find the practice of teaching in action everywhere in everyday life . . . teaching and learning are integral to our nature as humans.*
>
> (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008, p. xiii)

How might Kalantzis and Cope's comment apply to our understanding of music learning and teaching? Lucy Green's latest book, *Music, Informal Learning and the School*: *A New Classroom Pedagogy* (Green, 2008) posits a possible solution: that the learning taking place among popular musicians, developed out of a need to create and perform pieces of music, and found 'everywhere in everyday life' rather than in the formalised settings of the majority of music classrooms, has potential to guide music educators in their work, their philosophical positions, and their pedagogic strategies and outcomes. This is 'big picture' thinking—something readers of Green's earlier works, such as *How Popular Musicians Learn: A Way Ahead for Music Education* (Green, 2001) will have come to expect. In the following I take Green's approach and apply it to a parallel context to demonstrate a similar outcome to Green's: that what happens in many music classrooms sets up a barrier between schools and the real world, but that careful analysis of what happens in the world of day-to-day music activity can help reshape learning and teaching strategies, and can assist in rethinking and strengthening reasons for studying (and teaching) music. While Green takes her impetus from popular music practices, I base my thinking on my experiences as a student, teacher and performer of Balinese music. In this way, much of what follows has an autoethnographic trace; only by living the acts of learning and teaching Balinese music could my position have been clarified for me. The outcome of my discussion is to propose that music education needs to consider the alignment between music and its contextualised transmission, and that through understanding this alignment, music education can, as Green would put it, find a 'way ahead' and a 'new classroom pedagogy.'

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The site for my discussion is performance, defined as physical interaction with music or required to make music. My position is that performance is a way of learning music, thus can be studied as a way to teach music; that successful teaching requires understanding, interpreting and responding to learning. I use this position to propose recognition of a field of study, ethnopedagogy, in which the learning and teaching of music are perceived as culturally contextualised. To explain this and provide examples through which to problematise music pedagogy and theorise solutions, discussion is divided into two parts. The first reaffirms that in many music education settings, from private studios to community music groups to classrooms in schools and universities, there is agreement that performance of music is both a site for implementation of pedagogy and an outcome of pedagogy. This part of the discussion includes reference to the role of performance in school based music education. As ways in which performance acts as pedagogy in these settings remain undiscussed, this is followed by a case study of performance classes in Balinese gamelan undertaken by university students in music education pre-service degree programs. This case study is used to demonstrate how performance can be perceived as pedagogy for learning music, not solely for learning a repertoire of Balinese music but for benefits to the undertaking of learning music in general, and for consideration of how music is learned and consequently, can be taught.

The argument to be put and the definition of ethnopedagogy provided rely on acceptance of the theory of the cultural aesthetics of learning and teaching. This theory postulates that in the same way that music differs from culture to culture, and reflects different applications of musical roles, values, meanings and significances, ways of learning and ways of teaching also differ from location to location, and that these ways of learning and teaching are also culturally loaded and influenced. Further, these different ways of learning and teaching embody aesthetic positions symbiotic with the music under consideration. In addition to Green's work (Green, 2001, 2008), this theory of music learning and teaching follows from the work of writers such as Berliner (1994), Rice (1994), Brinner (1995) and Magowan (2007), whose ethnomusicological work treats music transmission as a serious component of the contextualised study of music, and on Mackinlay's (2007) discussion of the teaching of Indigenous women's music and dance in an Australian university setting. In the cultural aesthetics of learning and teaching, pedagogy is linked inextricably to, and reflects, the music it transmits.

Performance as a component of music learning and teaching

There is general agreement in the music education community that music is best learnt through a judicious integration of the development of listening skills, engagement with various forms of music creation (arranging, composing, experimenting, improvising) in both individual and group situations, ongoing growth in understanding music, and practical experience of music through playing instruments, moving the body and singing. Green's work mirrors this in her discussion of how the projects described in *Music, Informal Learning and the School* function pedagogically:

> Stage 1 involved 'dropping pupils in at the deep end' . . . learning by listening and copying a recording . . . the integration of listening, performing, improvising and composing was implicit, particularly with regards to listening and performing, and also to some extent improvising. (Green, 2008, p. 25)

In this type of scenario of teaching strategies and learning activities, performance, read as the purposeful activity of making or moving to sound rather than the presentation of a polished instantiation of a musical work, already has an established history as a member of a composite approach to music learning and teaching. This is regularly expressed in the literature of music education and in syllabus documents. For example, in his explanation of how American school based music education should function, Hoffer (2001, p. 40) demonstrates how making music, understanding and knowing music, and valuing music are to result from activities in performing music, reading music, listening to music, describing music, and creating music. In Music syllabuses in NSW (Australia), we read that

> The aim of the *Music Years 7–10 Syllabus* is to provide students with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for active engagement and enjoyment in performing, composing and listening, and to allow a range of music to have a continuing role in their lives. (New South Wales Board of Studies, 2003, p. 10)

Students in this Australian school system are,

> to develop knowledge and skills about the concepts of music and of music as an art form through performance, composition, musicology and aural activities in a variety of cultural and historical contexts. (New South Wales Board of Studies, 1999a, p. 9)

Referring to the integrated nature of music learning and teaching, another NSW syllabus indicates that,

> The learning experiences are performance, composition, musicology and aural. Students develop skills through the integration of these learning experiences. (New South Wales Board of Studies, 1999b, p. 13)

It needs to be remembered in discussion of performance as an activity in this integrated model that in music education curriculum terminology any practical activity is often labelled 'performance'. This can be as simple as clapping a short rhythm, or singing a response to a sung question. Performance, in music education, is therefore (1) symbiotic with other learning and teaching strategies in the development of aural skills, creating music and understanding music, (2) a spectrum of activities, from simple, short tasks, through to practising, rehearsing and workshop involvement, and (3) the final presentation of pieces of music.

Rethinking pedagogy through learning Balinese gamelan

In many cases the benefits to be gained from participation in performance activities in music classrooms are taken for granted, and performance is positioned in syllabuses and music education literature as an end in its own right, not as a site of learning about music; its value as a form of pedagogy is neglected. To explain how this position can be contraverted I now discuss the teaching of Balinese gamelan to university students in undergraduate and graduate pre-service degree programs for music. By focussing on music and the learning and teaching strategies of its origins, I create an area of discussion that is devoid of cultural and musical baggage (cf. Bourdieu, 1993) resulting from backgrounds in Western music and the ways it is taught across a range of settings: studios, classrooms, ensembles, community groups. In the case of Balinese gamelan as a site of discussion, for students such removal from their previous understandings of music is almost complete, involving musical instruments, iconography, music aesthetics, music history, tuning systems, playing techniques, repertoire, and characteristics of music; previously unexperienced learning and teaching styles are also encountered, particularly through a lack of notation. Placing students in this context removes them from their musical 'comfort zones'. Coincidentally, there is a hope of removing them from their ideological comfort zones as far as music learning and teaching are concerned and a hope that they will question their beliefs about how music can be learnt and taught. Challenging students' ideas and forcing them to construct their own beliefs about learning and teaching are hidden agendas of the undertaking (Dunbar-Hall, 2007), although it must be admitted that constructing an empty conceptual space brings with it the coincidental construction of sites of student prejudice—against learning in non-notated settings, against learning to perform on non-Western instruments, and against the personal educational opportunities that membership of such an ensemble puts forward (see also Solis, 2004, for discussions of the uses and implications of non-Western ensembles in university settings).

The experiences referred to here are in one-semester subjects in performance on Balinese gamelan as components of a four year undergraduate Bachelor of Music (Music Education) program and a three semester graduate Bachelor of Teaching program. Students in these programs learn a small repertoire of Balinese music, study Balinese music as a culturally contextualised musical artefact, and analyse traditional Balinese music teaching practices. These subjects are taught by an Australian specialist with an extensive background in Balinese music; teaching utilises my institution's own Balinese gamelan semara dana. Reflecting the ideological position of faculty that experience in situations that are as authentic as possible is a requirement of the preparation of music educators, these classes supersede ones in which a range of non-Western instruments were visually observed, and general (non-performance based) surveys of non-Western music were given.

Underpinning this teaching is another ideology—that to teach multiculturally requires understanding of culture as a concept. This covers areas such as culture as a process, culture as continual development, culture as identity marker, culture as a site of negotiation. Implicitly, these classes also demonstrate that music is an act of embodiment in many ways, that music relies on the physical presence of performers (and audiences), that as memorised repertoire, it relies on individuals passing knowledge from themselves to others—in effect the knower embodies the music, its aesthetic dimensions and performance styles and techniques. This prioritises the body and mind above the ability to reproduce music from a notated source.

Learning to perform Balinese gamelan music in the manner that Balinese would learn it raises a number of issues influential on the development of music educators:

- Balinese gamelan music is a performative art. It is not generally theorised by performers, nor is it the subject of theoretical exercises. The music is learnt by playing it
- Technical exercises that isolate specific physical patterns or skills do not exist. Learners learn pieces of music and requisite technique as it occurs
- There is no division between pieces deemed suitable for children to learn and those for adults. Specially created music for children is not a reality

- Learning relies on a belief that repetition of the music will result in the music 'entering the muscles'—learning and performing are intensely physical activities
- Teaching/learning situations do not include high levels of talk—music is taught and learnt primarily through practical activity
- The learning context, similarly to performance contexts, includes high levels of music aesthetics—which often require decoding by specialists
- If dancer/s are present (music and dance being symbiotic in Balinese culture), they can be 'read' as 'scores' by instrumentalists, raising issues of music as embodiment (see Ellingson, 1992)
- As non-notated music, Balinese music focuses attention on the personnel involved in teaching, learning and performing
- Music is learnt in an unvoiced analytical way through its layers and components
- Aspects of spatial organization assist learning and teaching processes and also indicate aspects of Balinese cosmological belief systems.

The last two of these issues are worth discussing in depth as they differ markedly from ways Western music is generally learnt and taught. They also act as examples of how learning to perform raises issues of learning, teaching, knowing and understanding music.

Teaching analytically

Balinese gamelan teachers have a generic way of teaching pieces of music. This relies on separating the various instrument-related layers of the music and teaching each one separately, later recombining them as a complete ensemble texture. As teaching occurs in a group situation and is highly repetitive, all players hear (and 'learn') all the parts of a piece. As all parts are drawn from or are elaborated from the *pokok* (melodic framework) of each piece of music, knowing the *pokok* is crucial for all players, something which this teaching method leads to. Figure 1 shows the instrument-related layers of typical Balinese gamelan music.

Instrument/s	**Pitch layer/s in gamelan**	**Role/s**
kendang (drums), *kempli* (small horizontal gong), *ceng ceng* (small cymbals)	n/a	rhythmic impetus, structural signals
kantilan	highest	melodic elaboration, melody
gangsa	high–middle	melodic elaboration, melody
reong	middle	melodic elaboration
penyacah	middle–low	*pokok*—melodic framework
calung	low	*pokok*—melodic framework
jegogan	low	*pokok*—melodic framework
gongs	lowest	punctuation

Figure 1: Instrument-related layers and pitch levels in typical Balinese gamelan music texture

If this teaching strategy is compared to musical analysis which functions by studying the component parts of a piece of music and their recontextualisation into the piece as whole (e.g. as demonstrated by White, 1984) or as 'explicit attentiveness to musical design and architecture' (Tenzer, 2006, p. 6), it can be seen that the teaching process of Balinese musicians, which separates components of a piece of music and later recombines them, is, in effect, an acted out analysis, even if this is unrecognised and implicit. As Tenzer (2006, p. 6) notes, "…musicians in many cultures preserve complex musical structures in their minds without notation as a reference and think theoretically or analytically about them." That a form of 'analysis' is performed, rather than conceptualised without sound, reinforces reliance in this example on performed music as the basis of learning (and teaching).

This differs markedly from Western students' backgrounds. It is sound-based, rather than theoretical, is non-notated, relies on memory, and results in each player being familiar with (and probably being able to perform) all the parts in the texture of Balinese gamelan music. In fact, although this is not typical in Balinese contexts, in Western learning of Balinese gamelan it is common for members of a group to perform across a range of instruments; this is expected of students in the courses under discussion here and intensifies their learning. Through such an experience, learning to perform becomes a reified, lived analysis, and coincidentally an acted out teaching/learning model.

Spatial organisation

The spatial logistics of learning situations for performance are regularly encountered by music educators who work with choirs and instrumental ensembles. They are also an important factor for consideration in the planning and delivery of music classes in school situations. Choir directors seem to have more scope for how to position performers in ensembles than do instrumental directors, who tend to favour standardised seating plans. The ways instruments and players in a Balinese gamelan are positioned are important aspects of musical organisation, culturally understood personal interaction, ensemble participation, performance practice, and strategies for learning and teaching. They also align with Balinese directional beliefs and practices as observable in architecture and village layout. For these reasons, attention to these and discussion of them with students become pedagogic strategies related directly to acts of performance. Through proactive experience of the physical setup of a gamelan, students embody abstract principles of music and society.

Balinese gamelans are set up for rehearsing and performing to accommodate available space. Certain ways of organising instruments, dancers and audiences, however, can be extrapolated from practice. That these are longstanding and represent a tradition of performance practice can be verified by reference to pictures of performances from the 1920s and 1930s. There is a tendency to create an open performance space for dancers by lining instruments on opposing sides of a space, or of creating either a three or four sided 'box' around any dance activity. If performance is in front of a temple or palace façade, the façade itself, which will contain a set of steps leading through an archway or gate/doorway, becomes part of the set up of the ensemble (Fig. 2). These ways of setting up instruments, as physical demarcation of dance space, emphasise links between dance and music, and enable teaching/learning objectives to occur. Figure 3, for example, shows a famous dance teacher, I Ketut Maria, teaching a child dancer inside a 'boxed' gamelan setup in the 1930s. The use of instruments to delineate the dance space is clear. A non-instrumental application of the same creation of performance space can be seen in Figure 4. This shows a performance of *djanger*, a form of danced theatre with vocal accompaniment. Contemporary performance groups (such as with gamelan instruments and rock drum kit) still apply this means of positioning instruments and players (see Figure 5).

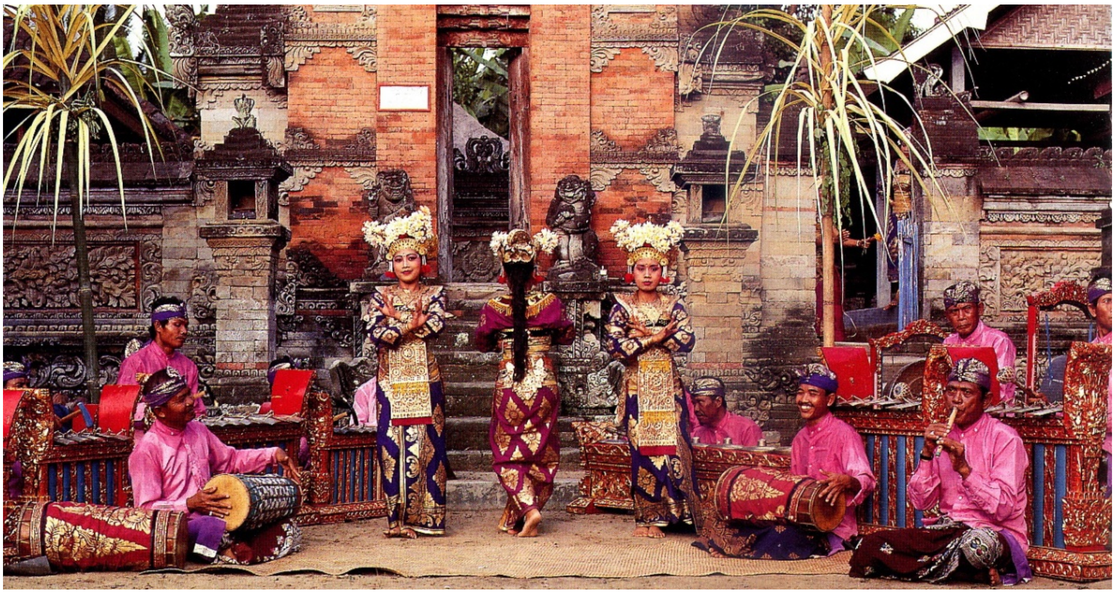

Figure 2: *Legong* performers framed by a temple façade and gamelan instruments and their players

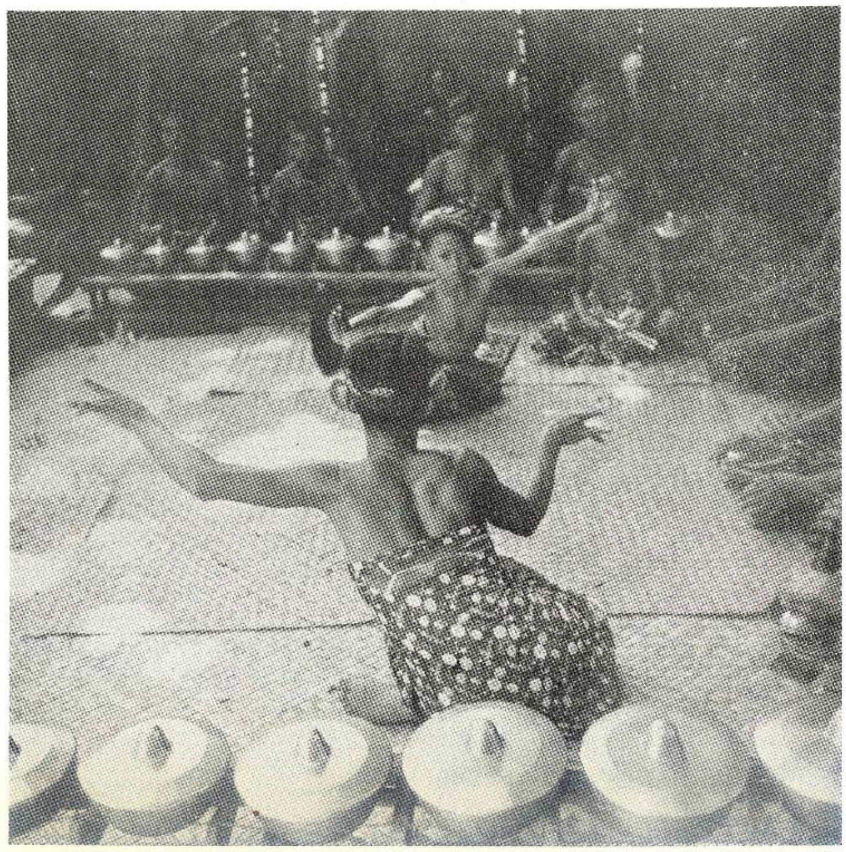

Figure 3: I Ketut Maria teaching a boy dancer in the 1930s

In performing situations and for teaching, the 'box' setup allows constant visual contact between performers (compared to Western band/orchestral setups in which performers all face the one direction and thus cannot have visual contact with each other). This reinforces the roles of different sections of the gamelan—for example, the playing of the *pokok* (basic melodic line) by the lower pitched instruments, *gongan* (gong strokes that outline musical structures), rapid figuration of the four players on the *reong*, and the *kotekan* (rapid interlocking) parts of the middle and high range *gegenderan* instruments. The central position of the drummer/s, *kempli* and *ceng-ceng* players emphasise their roles as the drivers of rhythm and structure of any piece.

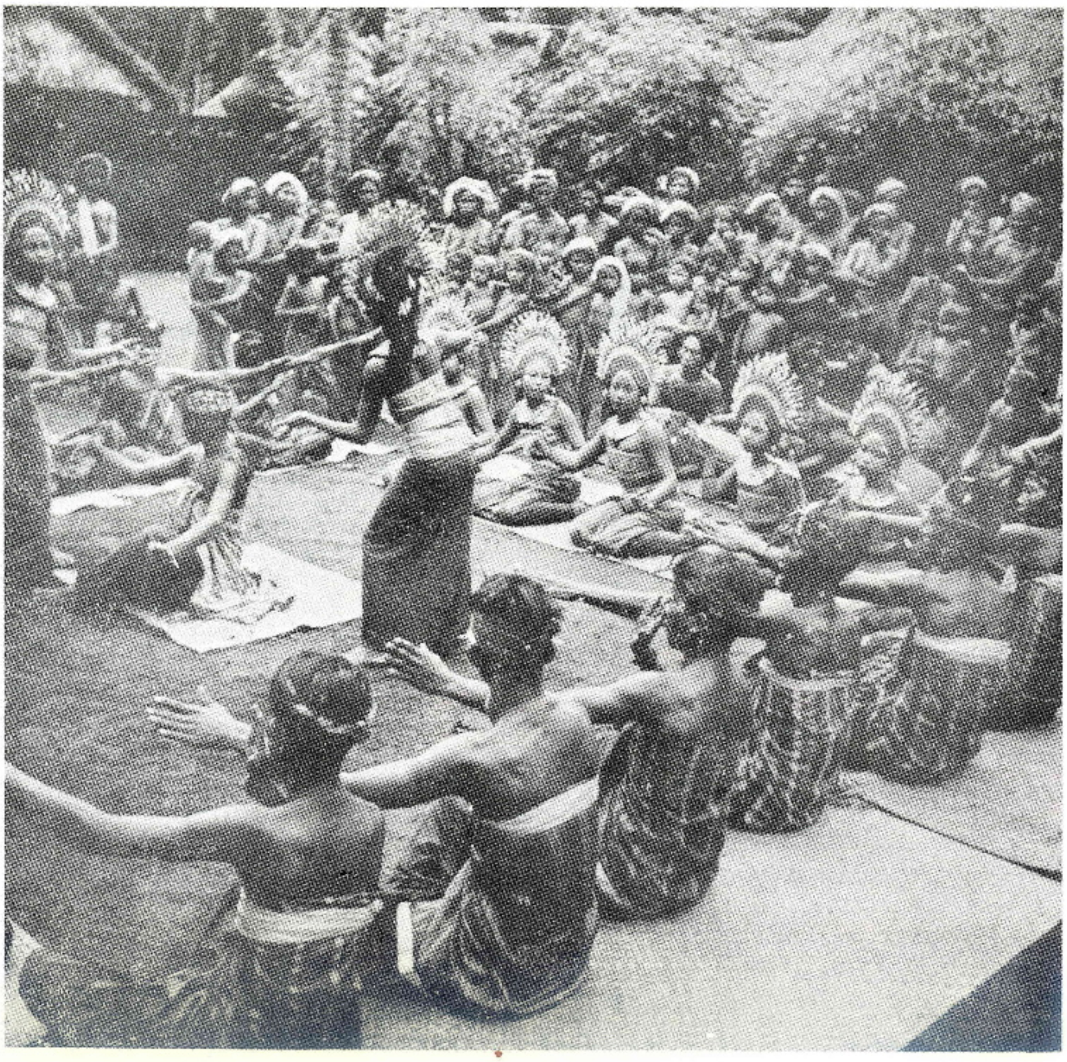

Figure 4: Photograph of a *djanger* performance from the 1930s

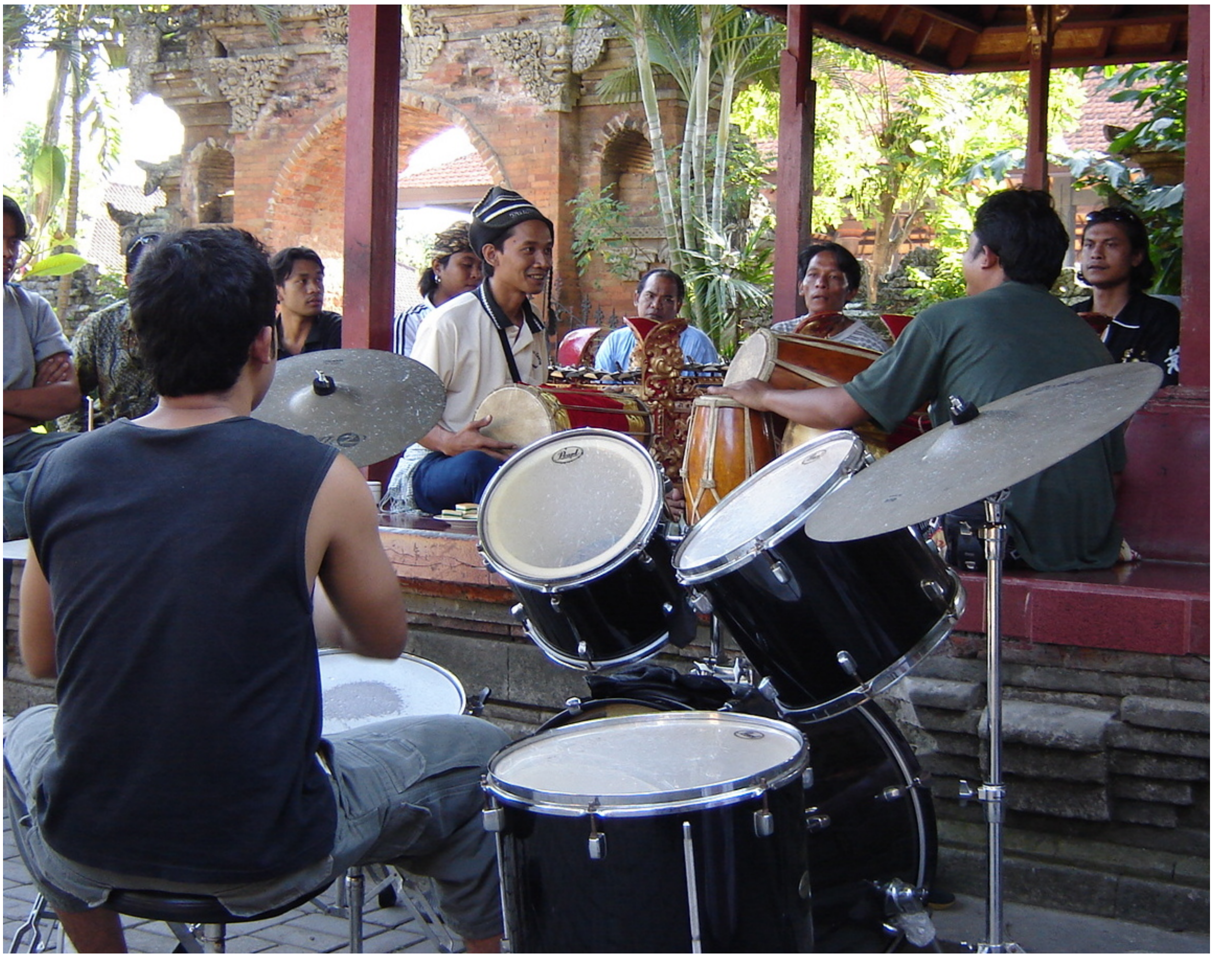

Figure 5: Photograph of a contemporary group using gamelan drums and *gegenderan* instruments with a rock drum kit positioned in a typical 'boxed' setup (NB—visual contact between players)

This reading of Balinese gamelan spatial organization emphasises practicalities of visual and aural contact between instrumentalists, and between instrumentalists and dancers. Another, more complex layer of spatial organization is also at work here. This represents another significant pedagogical opportunity through which cultural dimensions of music, and music learning and teaching, can be raised.

In Balinese cosmology the world is perceived as a matrix of five directions (see Fig 6):

Kaja
(toward Gunung Agung, home of gods
and source of spiritual wellbeing)

Kauh	**Puseh**	**Kangin**
(towards sunset)	(centre)	(towards sunrise)

Kelod
(toward the sea, home of
evil forces)

Figure 6: Balinese directional matrix

This strongly directional way of thinking is relational rather than absolute—the positions of *kaja* and *kelod* vary depending on where one is in Bali—unlike in Western directional thinking which is absolute (i.e., north is always in the same direction regardless of one's physical position). Balinese interpret this matrix not only in a physical way, but as symbolic of religious forces, and deities and their associated colours (Figure 7).

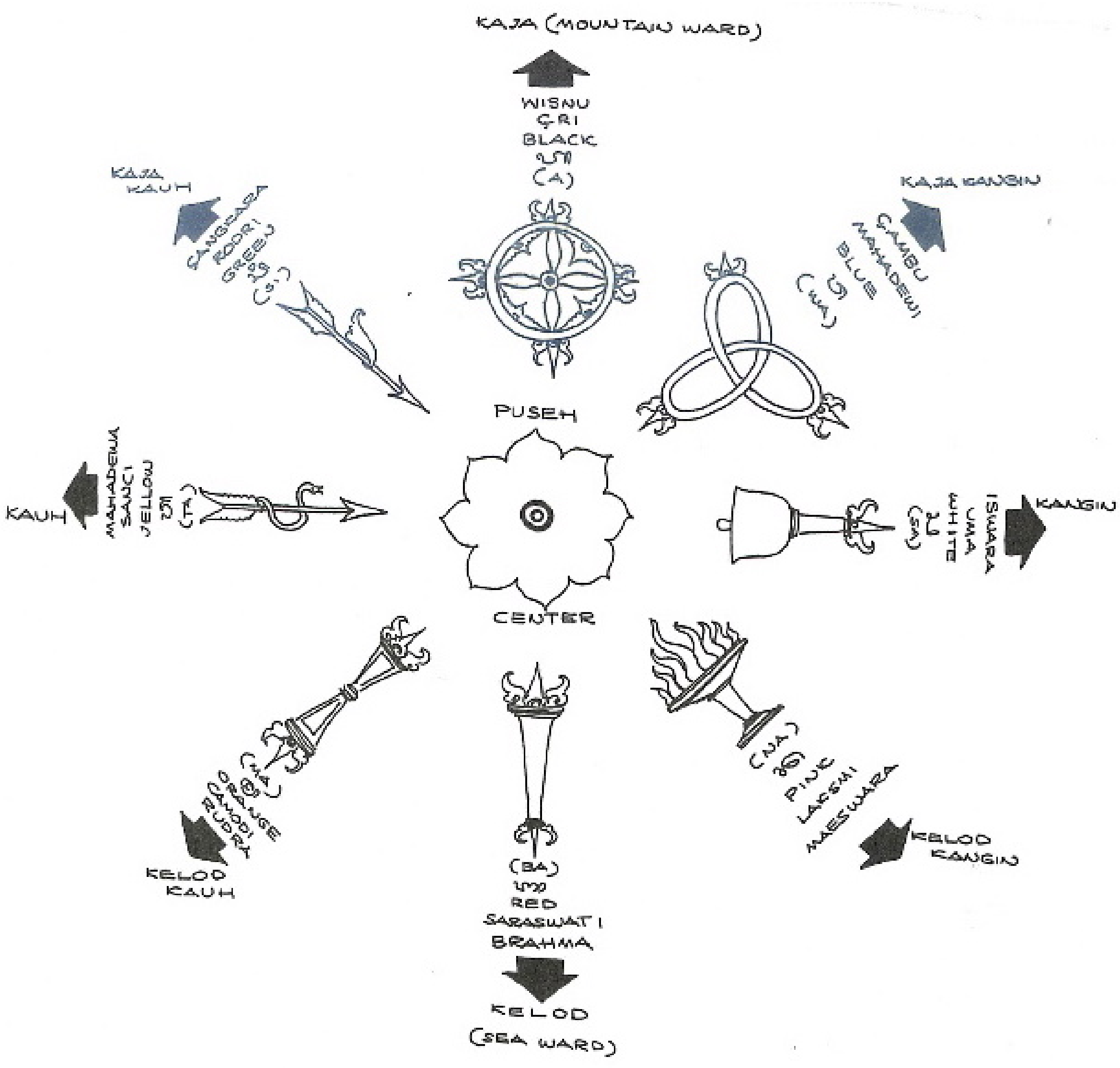
KAJA (MOUNTAIN WARD)
WISNU
ÇRI
BLACK
(A)
KAJA KAUH
SANGKARA
RODRI
GREEN
(SA)
KAJA KANGIN
ÇAMBU
MAHADEWI
BLUE
(WA)
PUSEH
KAUH
MAHADEWA
SANCI
YELLOW
(TA)
KANGIN
ISWARA
UMA
WHITE
(SA)
CENTER
(MA)
ORANGE
ÇAMODI
RUDRA
KELOD KAUH
(NA)
PINK
LAKSMI
MAESWARA
KELOD KANGIN
(BA)
RED
SARASWATI
BRAHMA
KELOD
(SEA WARD)

Figure 7: Balinese interpretations of the directional matrix

This matrix can be observed at work in village layout, where religiously significant buildings or places (such as temples) are positioned in *kaja* or *kangin* locations, and places associated with death (eg cremation sites and burial grounds) are located in *kauh* or *kelod* parts of villages. Other important buildings that are significant for village life (such as markets, community meeting pavilions and the palaces of local royalty) are usually in *puseh* positions, emphasising their roles as central to village social and economic life. Conceptually, the idea of *puseh*, as combination of the powers of the surrounding outer directions, reflects the Balinese social practice of *gotong royong*—collaborative effort in which individuality is subsumed in favour of a conceptual focus on group effort and achievement.

Adoption of some type of square/boxed plan for the setting out of instruments (and therefore, players) can be seen as echoing the significance of the four outer directions, while *puseh* (the centre) is the significant location for those instruments central to the performance of any piece and for dancers—the focus of the music and visual reification of the sound of the gamelan. *Puseh* in a gamelan 'box' setup becomes a musical and cognitive focus of performance in the same way that *puseh* is the combinatory focal point of the *kaja-kelod* and *kangin-kauh* axes.

Organising the instruments of a Balinese gamelan directionally in a set manner not only outlines aspects of Balinese spatial cosmology, it provides access to logical musical objectives. Eye contact and the ability to see what each instrumental part consists of not only act as cues in performance, but help understanding of the layered characteristics of Balinese gamelan music in which different sections of instruments have specific roles in the texture of the music (see Fig 1). Through this aspect of learning to perform in a Balinese gamelan, performance becomes a gateway not only into understanding Balinese music, but also into understanding significant socio-cultural aspects of Balinese life. Moreover, this indicates that for many Balinese people, the actualities of music and dance demonstrate aspects of Balinese socio-religious thinking. When engaged in performance activity, students of a gamelan are positioned in the matrix of directional axes and, perhaps unknowingly, occupy musically defined positions and simultaneously embody aspects of Balinese cosmology. Performing, in this reading, is a site for many types of learning.

Conclusion: Ethnopedagogy as discourse

> I am more convinced than ever that there must be better ways of preparing musicians than those worn out ideas that continue to form the main core of activities in formal music training. (McPherson, 2003, p. 5)

It was not the intention of this discussion to debunk the canon of music education methods at work in Western music learning institutions, even if, as Green implies, such criticism is not unfounded. Rather, my purpose was to propose that attention to the sub-texts of performance and to issues that underpin performance contexts, lead to ways of thinking about the purposes of music education, and about pedagogy. Much that occurs in a gamelan lesson for Australian students acts as critique of those students' previous music learning experiences, and for those who teach, of their ongoing teaching practices. Thus, a discourse about learning and teaching begins through which music education can move into productive ways of encouraging students to understand music.

Various writers have commented on the learning and teaching of Balinese music under the guidance of Balinese musicians (McPhee, 1966; Tenzer, 1991; Kitley, 1995; Dunbar-Hall, 2000; Gold, 2004), agreeing on factors such as the lack of notation; a requirement that music is memorised; the importance of group participation; use of rote learning; the need to respond to unpredicted music cues; the autocratic position of the teacher as embodiment of repertoire, playing style and performance aesthetics; and the kinaesthetics of performance. Often these writers draw attention to differences between Balinese and standard Westernised ways of learning and teaching music, and comment on benefits to their own personal musical knowledge and understanding that result from involvement in Balinese learning situations. In the same way that Green's examples of learning practices in popular music contradict what happens in many music classrooms, these elements of learning and teaching are in many cases the opposite of what non-Balinese students are used to. For the students in Balinese gamelan classes at my institution, learning in a group situation, above all, seems to be unusual, as students mostly have come from one-to-one instrumental/vocal learning situations. Even those with band/orchestral backgrounds find being a member of a gamelan confronting, as it requires subsuming of musical individuality in favour of true group effort. That gamelan lessons include little verbal direction, rely on intense repetition of passages (until they 'enter the muscles' as Balinese musicians put it), and allow the making of mistakes as a positive learning strategy, are also elements of classes that differ from what students have become accustomed to. A focus on the expectations placed on the individual (to know repertoire, to contribute to group effort, etc) forces attention onto each student's responsibilities, replacing dependence on notation with dependence on the self. All of these extrapolations from the experience of learning Balinese gamelan music echo the types of activities that Green analyses as aspects of informal music learning, and which she uses as the bases for proposed curriculum outlines and expectations. The results of these differences in teaching method, and therefore expectations of learning style/s, are to focus attention on pedagogy, to separate learning and teaching from each other for the purposes of analysis of them, and to pose questions about the efficacy of different ways to approach pedagogy. In short, performance lessons become, whether implicitly through undiscussed participation or explicitly through discussion of issues raised, a discourse on pedagogy.

This has serious implications for music education. It requires that performance, often the topic of research into issues of skill acquisition, the efficacy of practising, and psycho-motor activity (for example, as analysed by Lehman and Davidson, 2002), becomes a site for thinking about learning and teaching, and a culturally influenced activity with much to teach apart from repertoire and technique. It challenges music educators to engage in ethnopedagogy—that is, to utilise and interpret a range of pedagogic strategies to reflect the types of music being taught and the cultures from which those musics derive. It requires rethinking of the fit between pedagogy and music, calling for wider understanding of potential ethnomusicological dimensions of music education. The possible outcomes for music education of a belief in the cultural aesthetics of learning and teaching can be unsettling by proposing that attention to ethnopedagogy can assist in understanding music under consideration, can deepen understanding of the culture surrounding a music, can teach about the music aesthetics of a culture, and can broaden the methodological approaches of music educators. In this setting, ethnopedagogy becomes a basis for music teaching, and, as it focuses on how music is learnt and what purposes, both personal and communal, underpin learning, for the philosophical preparation of music educators.

Like Green's work, this will be unsettling, especially as a challenge to possible complacency in a belief that music education has reached a stage of acceptable multicultural practice. In a setting where multiculturalism is an accepted facet of educational contexts, consideration of the cultural aesthetics of music learning and teaching and expectations that music educators will implement ethnopedagogy opens a range of ideological issues for debate. If the definition of multiculturalism, that different cultures inhabiting the one location are guaranteed equity and unqualified co-existence, is accepted, not to teach music through the methods and strategies used in its origins is a contradiction of the basis of multiculturalism. Use of teaching content from diverse cultural sources can give the impression that a multicultural ethos is in force in music education. However, neglecting culturally derived pedagogies negates the attempt to be multicultural as it imposes, and subsequently reinforces, culturally inappropriate methodologies onto music neatly, and seemingly educationally, wiping away the equity and respect which are at the basis of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism should be about more than the content of lessons; it should cover all aspects of learning and teaching situations. Adopting an ethnopedagogic approach to music education can be a solution to these problematic situations and another way to develop a new pedagogy through which music education will move ahead.

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