THE ROLE OF THE GENDER BARUNG IN CREATING THE AESTHETIC OF SURAKARTA STYLE JAVANESE KARAWITAN

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Abstract

The gender barung is one of the instruments found in a traditional gamelan Ageng ensemble which plays Surakarta style karawitan. This instrument is required to interpret both pathet and garap in its performance. One of the roles or functions of this instrument is to embellish the melody with a variety of different cengkok and wiled. To meet the aesthetical requirements for playing the gender barung, it is necessary to have a good command of its basic playing technique.

In order to discuss the subject of this article, a qualitative research method is used with an approach which includes a literature study and participant observation to analyze the process through which the gender barung creates the aesthetics of karawitan. Every gender artist has a different strength of expression which conceptually can be observed through the artist’s technique, cengkok, and wiled used in performance.

From the results of the discussion, it can be concluded that it is important to have a good command of the basic playing technique of the gender barung since this enables the musician to build the aesthetics of karawitan. Embat is also an important element of gamelan tuning since the harmonization that appears in the playing of the gender barung is a powerful structure for creating the aesthetics of karawitan. The character of a gender artist can
be identified from the way he or she plays. The involvement of the gender barung in a performance allows the character of the gendhing to emerge or come to light.

Keywords: Technique, cengkok.

1. Introduction

The gender barung is a Javanese gamelan instrument that is found in a Surakarta style gamelan ageng ensemble. In addition to the gender barung, a gamelan ageng ensemble also includes a gender penerus. The gender is also used in Balinese gamelan ensembles, although there are a number of physical differences between the Javanese gender and Balinese gender. In a Balinese gamelan ensemble, the gender is more exclusive as it is used only for performances of Balinese wayang kulit, known as gender wayang. In terms of its physical appearance, the gender barung used in Surakarta style Javanese gamelan generally consists of a number of components or elements, including: the bilah, bumbungan, grobogan, pluntur, sanggan, sindik, bremara, and tapak dara. The bilah is the main element which acts as the sound source of the gender; the bumbungan functions as a resonator to increase the volume of the sound created by the bilah; the function of the rancakan or grobogan is to integrate all the different components of the gender barung. The pluntur joins together the bilah to keep them in the correct order so that they can be played; the sanggan has the function of supporting the bilah on top of the resonators; the sindik connects the bilah with the pluntur; the bremara holds the pluntur in place at each end of the instrument; and the tapak dara is the base which holds the instrument upright and keeps it steady. This is a brief and general description of the gender barung instrument. In a gamelan ageng ensemble, other instruments belonging to the bilah family include the gen-
der penerus and slenthem. All three have the same elements but the size of the bilah on each of the three instruments is different.

From the time of its first appearance up to the present day, the gender barung has undergone a number of changes or additions, both in terms of its physical appearance and also its number of bilah. Hood states that the appearance of the gender barung today is a modification of its former appearance which was relatively taller and as such, required a special seat for the player to sit on in order to play the instrument. Its current appearance was adapted to suit the ethics of the royal palace, or Keraton, where the musicians were prohibited from sitting at a higher level than the king, and for this reason, all of the gamelan players had to be seated on the floor (Kunst, 1949:173).

It has been established that in its early days, the gender barung had 10 bilah. Nowadays, this kind of gender is very uncommon. In the royal palace of Surakarta (the Keraton Kasunanan) there is still a gender barung with 10 bilah which is used in the ceremonial gamelan pakurmatan ensemble known as Kodok Ngorek. It is, however, no longer used in a gamelan ageng ensemble. There is very little evidence remaining about the existence of a gender barung with 11 bilah. In the Keraton Kasunanan, almost all the different gamelan ensembles have gender barung with 12 bilah (pethit 2). This is also the case with what is believed to be the oldest gamelan ensemble, namely gamelan Lokananta (PB II), which also has 12 bilah. There are two gamelan ensembles in the keraton that have gender barung with 13 bilah (pethit 3), namely the ensembles Mangun Harjo Harjo Winangun and Gora Arum. (Joko Daryanto, interview 10 December 2013.) It would seem that the gamelan Lokananta from the collection of PBII, with its 12-bilah gender barung, became the reference for future gamelan sets. Ensembles which included a gender barung with
13 bilah, meanwhile, were used for art activities outside the keraton.

It is estimated that in order to reach the number of bilah commonly used today (14 bilah), there must have been a logical or chronological progression from a gender barung with 11, then 12, 13, and finally 14 bilah. In reality today, we more frequently come across gender barung with 14 bilah, and only see a small number with 13 bilah. Martopangrawit states that 14 bilah are more than sufficient to accommodate the variety of cengkok played on the gender barung (Martopangrawit, 1976:30). In fact, 13 bilah are enough to play all the cengkok that have evolved on the gender barung, and the use of 14 bilah is for no other reason than to make the physical appearance more attractive since it is more symmetrical. The reason why it appears more symmetrical is that between every two bilah there is a sanggan, and if the number of bilah is only 13, at one place there will be only a single bilah between the sanggan, making the appearance unsymmetrical.

The pitches on gender barung instruments with 14 bilah vary from one place to another. On some instruments, the highest note (pethit) is pitch 3 (dada), while in another place the highest note (pethit) is pitch 5 (lima). There is no explanation why the highest bilah (pethit) is tuned to pitch 5 (lima), because as far as I am aware, in practice, in Surakarta style karawitan, there are no existing cengkok that use pethit pitch 5 (lima). To be more clear, the most common arrangement of pitches on the gender barung is as follows: 6 1 2 3 5 6 1 2 3 5 6 1 2 3

On a gender with pethit pitch 5 (lima), the lowest note is q, in order to keep the number of bilah at 14. The way of writing the notation used above is known as kepatihan notation. In accordance with the layout of the bilah on the gender, higher notes are indicated by the use of a dot above the note and lower notes
with a dot below the note. For notes in the middle range, no dots are used either above or below the notes.

The *gender barung* is played with two mallets (*tabuh*), one held in each hand. The mallets consist of flat, round, wooden discs with a short stick protruding from the center of each that is held in the player’s hand. The outer edges of the wooden discs are covered with cloth so that when the instrument is struck it produces a soft sound rather than a hard, brittle tone.

The player holds each of the two mallets with a different grip. The left hand holds the mallet between the forefinger and the middle finger, with the fourth and fifth fingers following the curve of the middle finger. The forefinger presses down slightly on the handle of the mallet and the thumb is bent over the forefinger. The fourth and fifth fingers and the outer side of the hand are used to damp the *bilah* after they have been struck. The palm of the left hand faces sideways. In principle, the right-hand grip of the mallet is almost the same as the left, but the hand position is different, in that the palm of the hand faces downwards, unlike the left hand. The thumb and fifth finger are used to damp the *bilah* that have just been struck. For a clearer picture, the position and grip of the right and left hands is shown in the picture below.

There are several different ways of holding and using the mallets for the *gender barung* because there are no hard and fast rules about this. However, in my experience as a teacher of the *gender barung* for many years, I have always used the technique described above. The reason for this is that anatomically this technique causes no pain and allows freedom of movement for the left hand to play various techniques such as *samparan*, *sarungan*, or *ukel*. The playing technique for the *gender barung* requires a wider range of movement in the left hand than the right hand due to the demands of the *cengkok* played by this instrument.
As mentioned above, the presence of the gender barung in Surakarta style karawitan is not only found in a gamelan ageng ensemble but also in the ceremonial gamelan pakurmatan ensemble kodok ngorèk, while other gamelan pakurmatan ensembles do not include a gender barung. In principle, the music played by this ensemble – gendhing kodok ngorèk, uses only two notes and two kinds of irama, namely a fast irama (seseg) and a slow irama (tamban). In irama tamban, the gender barung participates in the performance. If we observe the melody played by the gender barung, the performance of gendhing kodok ngorèk in irama tamban consists of 4 gong cycles, or gongan, as seen from the cengkok played by the gender barung. This gendhing is known as gendhing Dhendha Gedhe. The range of notes for the gender cengkok is not more than 10 bilah (Rahayu Supanggah, 2002:35-37). The gender cengkok for this gendhing are shown below.

**Genderan Dhendha Gedhe for Kodok-ngorèk**

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccccc}
\cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & 5 \\
\cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & 1 & 6 & 5 & 5 & 5 & 5
\\
5 & 5 & 5 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 2 & 3 & 5 & 2 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 6
\\
\cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & 3 & 5 & 2 & 5 & 1 & 5 & 6
\\
6 & 6 & 6 & 1 & 5 & 3 & 2 & 3 & 6 & 3 & 5 & 6 & 5
\\
\cdot & \cdot & 2 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 1 & 6 & 5 & 3 & 2 & 3 & 5 & 6
\\
\cdot & 1 & 6 & 1 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 2
\\
1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 6 & 1 & 2 & 6 & 3 & 6 & 3 & 5 & 2
\\
5 & 3 & 5 & 2 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 6 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 6 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 2
\\
\cdot & 5 & \cdot & 1 & 5 & 6 & 3 & 2 & 3 & 5 & 5 & 5 & 5
\end{array}
\]
The notation above is copied from the book *Titilaras Cengkok-Cengkok Genderan Dengan Wiledannya Jidil II*, 1976: 62. Note: The top row is played by the right hand and the bottom row by the left hand. Both hands play their own individual parts at the same time.

### 2. Technique for playing the gender barung

The playing technique used for the gender barung is closely related to the techniques used for playing the different kinds of cengkok and also the actual technique for playing the instrument. The techniques related to cengkok are known as *kembang tiba*, *ukel pancaran*, *rangkep*, *lamba*, *laku* 1, 2, 4, 8, and 16 (Martopangrawit 1972:67); (Kunst 1949: 1975). The actual technique for playing the gender barung instrument involves the use of both hands (left and right), which do not always play the same notes as each other. A simple way of describing this technique is that the right hand plays a series of notes one after the other, either moving in step or in leaps, while the thumb and fifth finger are used to damp the notes after they have been played, also in turn. The same is true for the left hand, which plays a series of notes, either moving in step or in leaps, damping the notes in a similar manner with the fourth and fifth fingers and the side of the hand. In general, the function of the right hand is more rhythmic in nature while the function of the left hand is non-rhythmic, creating or ornamenting a melody, while the overall function of the gender barung is to create an ornamental melody based on the main or core melody (*lagu balungan*) (Matopangrawit 1972:3-4). The two hands work together to play a variety of different techniques, applying the wide range of cengkok that exist in the Surakarta style repertoire. These cengkok cannot be played properly without a good command of technique. The various
techniques that a *gender barung* player should be able to apply include *gembyang* technique, *gembyung* technique, *mipil* technique, *samparan* technique, *sarugan* technique, *pêthêtan* technique, *genukan* technique, and *ukelan* technique. Below is a basic explanation of the techniques that are used to play the *gender barung*. In the examples below, it is important to pay attention to the technique for damping the *bilah* of the *gender*. In practice, the player endeavors to produce a smooth, unbroken sound, which I often describe as damping in the style of “flowing water” or *mbanyu mili* (Kunst, 1949:187).

*Gembyang technique*, or *gembyangan*, is a playing technique in which both hands play the same note at the same time but in a different register, or with an interval of four *bilah* between the notes. For example, the left hand plays note 6 (nem) in the lower register and the right hand plays note 6 (nem) in the middle register. Below is an example of notation which applies the technique of *gembyang*. Suwardi refers to this technique as *mbalung* technique (2000:37).

```
3 5 6 1 5 6 1 2
```

Notes played by the right hand.

```
3 5 6 1 5 6 1 2
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Notes played by the left hand.

*Mipil technique* is a playing technique in which the two hands play the *bilah* of the *gender* in turn. In this technique, special attention must be paid to damping the *bilah*, as explained above, so that there is no gap between the sounding of one note and the next, or the notes are joined together smoothly (*mbanyu milih*). See also Suwardi (2000:28). Below is an example of notation using *mipil* technique.

```
5 . 1 . 6 . 6 i . . . . 6 . 6 . 1 2
3 . 3 1 . 2 . 3 3 5 . 5 2 3 5
```
In this technique, good coordination between the two hands is needed to produce a smooth and continuous sound.

**Samparan technique** is a technique in which the left hand plays three consecutive notes in descending order and the right hand plays a single note, whether *gembyang*, *kempyung*, or any other note, to coincide with the last of the three notes played by the left hand. Kunst refers to this technique using the term *nyaruk*, which is a metrical figure consisting of three consecutive notes that are played in descending order (Kunst, 1949: 188). This statement is somewhat different to current practice, and what Kunst is referring to is now known as *samparan* technique.

In this technique, attention should be given to damping the notes played by the left hand, with the first two notes being damped together after the third note is played. See also Suwardi (2000:28). Below is an example of notation which applies the technique of *samparan*.

```
. . . 1  . . . 6  . . . 5  . . . 3
. . 321  . . 216  . . 165  . .  653
```

Notes 3 and 2 are damped at the same time, after note 1 has been played.

**Sarugan technique** is essentially the opposite of *samparan* technique, in that the left hand plays three consecutive notes in succession, only this time in ascending order, and the right hand plays a single note, whether *gembyang*, *kempyung*, or another note, to coincide with the third note of the left hand. Kunst refers to this technique as *ngrachik* or *ngranchak*, which is a metrical figure consisting of three consecutive notes played in ascending order (Kunst. 1949:188).

In this technique, attention should be given to the damping technique of the left hand, with the first two notes being
damped together after the third note has been played. See also Suwardi (2000:28). Sarugan technique in principal is the opposite of samparan technique.

\[
\begin{align*}
\ldots \cdot \ 6 \ldots \cdot \ \hat{1} \ldots \cdot \ \hat{2} \ldots \cdot \ \hat{3} \\
\ldots \cdot \ 3 \ \hat{5} \ldots \cdot \ 6 \ \hat{1} \ldots \cdot \ 6 \ \hat{1} \ldots \cdot \ 1 \ 2 \ 3
\end{align*}
\]

**Genukan technique** is a technique in which the left hand damps one note before playing the next note, producing a broken or disjointed effect. The right hand continues to play and damp the notes in the usual way to produce a continuous sound. Hence, the playing and damping techniques of the right and left hands are not the same.

Example:

\[
\begin{align*}
5 \ \hat{1} \ 5 \ \hat{3} & \quad 6 \ 5 \ 6 \ \hat{1} \\
5 \ \hat{3} \ 3 \ \hat{3} & \quad 1 \ 2 \ 3
\end{align*}
\]

Note: note \( \hat{3} \) (lu besar) is played three times in a row and damped each time after it is played before the right hand plays note \( \hat{1} \) followed by note 5 and then note 3. In other words, note 3 in the lower register is damped first before it is played again. See also Suwardi (2000:39)

**Gembyungan technique** is a playing technique used by both hands at the same time, which may play any note or *bilah* of the *gender*. Often the left hand uses either samparan or sarugan technique while the right hand plays certain notes in accordance with the required cengkok or wiled, with an additional rhythmic function. An example of this kind of interplay between the right and left hands is shown below.
**Pêthêtan technique** is a playing technique similar to *mipil* but uses a different damping technique, in which each note is damped before the next note is sounded, both in the right and left hands, thus creating a disjointed effect, not a continuous sound (*mbanyu milî*).

The example below is taken from Suwardi (2000:42).

```
\[ 5 6 . 1 . 6 5 6 5 3 \]
\[ 2 3 532 6 356 5 . 2 1 2 \]
\[ 3 5 653 \]
```

**Ukelan technique** is a technique used in the left hand, which combines *samparan* technique with *sarugan* technique, producing a sound that circles around one particular note. The right hand, meanwhile, plays other notes, hence creating a rhythmic melody, while using the *mbanyu milî* damping technique.

Example:

```
\[ 5 6 . 6 . 5 3 2 5 6 5 3 2 \]
\[ 3 5 2 1 6 2 6 5 6 5 3 \]
```

In *samparan* technique, the left hand moves outwards. On the contrary, in *sarugan* technique, the left hand moves inwards.

All of the techniques for playing the *gender barung* described above are vital for a player to learn in order to present an
aesthetical performance on the *gender barung*. It is the combination of these various techniques that represents the feel (*rasa*) or expression of a *gender* player. A *gender* player must have a good command of all these different techniques. Without this, it is not possible to present a pleasing aesthetical performance. Therefore, the aesthetic in the performance of the *gender barung* is largely determined by the command of the techniques described above.

3. Aesthetic of the *Gender barung*

The musical function of a gamelan *ageng* ensemble can broadly speaking be divided into 3 large categories (see Supanggah, Martopangrawit, Richard Pickvance), namely the structural instrument, the melody instruments, and the *garap* or embellishing instruments. These three categories can be explained simply as follows: The structural instruments consist of the *gong, kempul, kenong, kethuk, kempyang, kecer*, and *kemanak,* and have the function of reinforcing or providing emphasis to a melodic form at regular intervals, in accordance with their own individual function and the playing characteristics of each instrument. The melody instruments consist of the *slenthem, demung, saron,* and *saron penerus,* and broadly speaking, these instruments play the melody of a *gendhing* in accordance with the function and characteristic playing style of each instrument. The *garap* instruments include the *rebab, kendhang, gender barung, gender penerus, bonang barung, bonang penerus, gambang, siter, suling,* and vocalists, and these instruments require certain tools and *cengkok* in accordance with the characteristics and playing technique of each instrument, which are based on the melody of the *gendhing*. In other words, in a performance, the *garap* instruments require the player to interpret the melody through the use of *cengkok* and certain norms and principles in accordance with the characteristics and nature
of each instrument. The technique for playing the gender barung is different from that of the rebab, and for this reason, it requires a different interpretation and the use of difference cengkok and wiled. In general, the playing techniques of all the different instruments in a gamelan ageng ensemble are not interchangeable. The unique characteristics and nature of each individual instrument mean that the player requires a good command of the playing technique in order to achieve the desired aesthetic.

The gender barung, using the technique with which it is played (as described above) can be played independently. In this sense, it is very different from any of the other instruments in a gamelan ageng ensemble. When playing it as a solo instrument, a gender barung player is able to present a performance that can be enjoyed aesthetically. The gender barung is one of few instruments that sounds pleasant when played by itself without any other accompanying instruments. The function of the gender barung is as follows.

1. to embellish the melody with its variety of cengkok and wiled
2. to play an introduction or buka for gendhing gender
3. to provide guidance (thinthingan) for the vocalist who sings a bawa or buka celuk
4. to accompany the singing of a puppet master (dhalang) in the performance of suluk/pathetan, sendhon, ada-ada, and so on
5. to create a particular mood for scenes in a shadow puppet performance

In the first function of the gender barung mentioned above, the gender plays metrically, while in the third, fourth, and fifth functions, its playing style is non-metric. All of these functions are carried out in accordance with the norms, ethics, and principles of gender playing. In creating the aesthetic of the perfor-
mance, in addition to adhering to the norms of playing *cengkok*, the most important aspect is the emotions, feelings, or mood of the *gender* player, since this is exposed or reflected in the performance. In addition, the aesthetic of the *gender barung* is not only determined by the player but is also related to the tuning of the instrument. Furthermore, the aesthetic of karawitan cannot be separated from the overall tuning of the gamelan instruments. The character of each individual gamelan ensemble is reflected by the tuning.

Since every gamelan ensemble has a different tuning, this means that the tuning of each *gender barung* is also different. Thus, the character and aesthetic of each *gender* will also differ. It should be noted that in the system used to tune a set of gamelan instruments, the *gender barung* is usually used as the *babon* or the basic reference for tuning all the other instruments in a gamelan *ageng* ensemble. This is confirmed by Sri Hastanto, who writes “…if they are asked to determine the *embat* of the tuning, this means that the musical characteristic of the tuning is entirely in their hands and the tuning process begins by tuning the *gender barung* instrument” (2012: 34). The reason for this is that the pitch range of the *gender barung* encompasses the pitches of all the other instruments, such as the *kempul*, *kenong*, *kethuk*, *slenthem*, *demung*, *saron*, *bonang barung*, and so on. Therefore, it follows on logically that the *embat* of every gamelan ensemble can be seen in or traced back to the *gender barung*. Sri Hastanto also writes: “*embat* is a musical concept in Javanese gamelan” (2012: 38). It is *embat* that forms the character of each Javanese gamelan ensemble. *Embat* also determines whether a *gendhing* feels pleasant, strong, bright, calm, and so on, when it is played. In the Javanese tuning system, the tuning of the instruments is not precise, as in the diatonic tuning of western musical instruments. Usually, the gamelan
tuner will intentionally create a slight different in the tuning to produce an undulating or wave effect when the same pitches are played. Sri Hastanto writes further: “...it is their habit to try and tune the pitches of a gembyangan so that they are not exactly the same (pleng) but tuned very slightly apart without ignoring the tolerance of how high or low the pitch is” (2012: 34). This difference in pitch may mean that the note is either above or below the pitch of the basic pitch (the babon). These slight differences in pitch created by the gamelan tuner produce a richness of sound that makes every single gamelan ensemble unique. This is a special skill that gamelan tuners possess and is also one of the treasures of the Javanese culture.

The aesthetic in a gender barung performance of an individual musician is determined to a large extent by the command of technique, cengkok, and wiled, and the experience of the player. In addition, the emotions, feelings, and mood of the player can strengthen the aesthetic of the performance when they correspond to the characteristics of the gendhing being performed. In other words, the aesthetic of the performance will be more apparent if the interpretation of the gendhing matches the mood of the player. On the contrary, it will be less apparent when a player who is feeling happy or joyful plays a gendhing with a sad, calm, or austere nature since the player’s current mood does not match the character of the gendhing being performed. This is not easy to learn because it concerns the interpretation of the gendhing, the character of the gendhing, the choice of treatment for the performance of a gendhing, the situation and conditions at the time of the performance, and so on. In addition, it is difficult to know the personal situation and condition of a gender player when he is playing. However, for musicians with experience in karawitan, it is possible to identify these matters.
The aesthetic that emerges from a gender player’s performance is also affected by the tuning or character of the gamelan ensemble, since every gamelan has its own individual character or feel (rasa). One ensemble may feel grander, more kingly, heroic, or commanding when it play a gendhing in pathet sanga, while these characteristics may not be apparent when another ensemble plays a gendhing in the same pathet. This is all influenced by the tuning of each gamelan ensemble or what is known in karawitan as embat. Embat plays an important role in creating the aesthetic of karawitan. Embat is determined by the intervals or distance between the different pitches in a gamelan ensemble. It is one of the aesthetical treasures that is found in gamelan ensembles throughout the world. Embat, therefore, is one of the reasons why gamelan is not tuned using the same system as diatonic music. On the subject of embat, Sri Hastanto writes: “…gamelan maestros say that certain ensembles have a bright feel while others have a calmer feel” (2012: 38). The different feel of different ensembles is what creates the aesthetic of karawitan that is produced by the musicians in a performance. The different feel of an ensemble is created by the distance or intervals between the notes, which is known as jangkah (Sri Hastanto, 2012:39).

The gender barung can produce or create the aesthetic in a karawitan performance through the cengkok that are used. In Bausastra, cengkok is defined as (1) pratingkah sing digawe-gawe murih katon becik (behaviour that is contrived so as to appear good); (2) elak-eluking swara ing lelagon tembang lan lsp (the rise and fall of a pitch in a vocal piece, etc.) The meaning of the word cengkok has a very close connection with the part played by the gender barung. A player manipulates or plays a particular cengkok by moving his right and left hands to play the notes that charac-
terize a certain cengkok so as to create a pleasant sound. The aesthetical effect is not created simply by playing certain notes. In order to facilitate the identification and learning of different cengkok, and to distinguish one cengkok from another, the cengkok played on the gender barung are given names. These names include: Gendhuk Kuning Gembyang (Kutuk Kuning Gembyang or KKG), Gendhuk Kuning Kempyung, Ayu Kuning, Tumurun, Jarit Kawung, Puthut gelut, Puthut semedi, Kacaryan, Ela-elo, Duduk, and so on. According to Martopangrawit (Titilaras Cengkok-cengkok Genderan, 1973), there are a number of gender cengkok that are based on or built upon a fixed melody(lagu mati) in irama dados with considerations of padang or ulihan or padang-ulihan. In addition, there are many more cengkok without names (Martopangrawit, 1972: 70).

The function of the gender barung in terms of its contribution to create the aesthetic of karawitan is very important. As well as being the babon in the system of tuning the pitches of a gamelan ensemble, the gender barung also plays an important role in its performance as one of the individual instruments of a gamelan ensemble. Through the artist, the gender barung helps build the aesthetic of karawitan with the use of all its different techniques as well as the rules, norms, and principles that it must adhere to in the choice of cengkok and wiled. The harmonization created by playing different notes at the same time or in sequence, the jumping, clashing, or chasing between different notes, in the cengkok of the gender barung, is a strong structure for building the aesthetic of karawitan. The involvement of the gender barung in a performance enables the character of a gendhing to emerge or be constructed. Through the music played on the gender barung, the character of a person can also emerge or be identified. Therefore, it is not surprising that artists such as Sabdo Suwarno, Ngasinah, Sardiman, Martopangrawit, Ibu Pringgo, and others
have each developed their own character (cak) of cengkok and wiled, which allows their personality to be identified.

The contribution of the gender barung also plays a part in determining the interpretation of the pathet. Furthermore, Martopangrawit writes: “...so we will explain that pathet is “garap”, changing pathet means changing garap (1972: 28). Hence, pathet helps to determine the feel or aesthetic of karawitan. Meanwhile, the gender is an instrument that interprets a melody through its treatment of cengkok. As mentioned above, the cengkok of the gender have names, and these names are used in all pathet and also in both the slendro and pelog tuning systems. To give an illustration of this, the cengkok kutuk kuning kempyung can be played in pathet sanga, or by moving all the notes up by a single pitch, it can also be played in pathet manyura. Physically (literally), this is the same cengkok. It has the same name and plays the same pattern, the only difference being it is a step higher. However, by doing this it creates a very different feel. The reason for this is the difference in the intervals (jangkah) between different notes on the gender itself. Despite the fact that the same cengkok is being played, the difference in jangkah between one note and another produces a different feel. This does not include the matter of the wiled or cak of every gender player, which also plays an important part in conveying a particular aesthetic in karawitan. Changing the cengkok kutuk kuning kempyung from pathet slendro sanga to pathet slendro manyura is just a single example. There are many other examples of the same cengkok being used in a different pathet and laras. This wealth of different cengkok, laras, and gendhing will of course produce a wide variety of different feelings or aesthetics. In addition, the wealth of different wiled and cak of each gender player also add to the richness of the aesthetic in karawitan.
The aesthetic of a gendhing is not only created by the gender barung; all the different instruments, including the vocalists, play an intrinsic role in creating the aesthetic of karawitan. Nevertheless, the gender barung plays a prominent role in developing the character of the aesthetic of pathet in a gendhing. This is because the gender barung has the ability to play or demonstrate the boundaries of a particular pathet, which in turn determines the aesthetic of the performance of a gendhing.

4. Closing

The gender barung is one of the instruments in a gamelan ageng ensemble. Gamelan ageng is a cultural product of the ethnic Javanese which has become deeply rooted in the culture and has been used for a variety of different functions by its supporting community for centuries. A deep-rooted culture gives rise to a tradition which is subsequently passed down from one generation to another. As such, culture plays an important role in determining a person’s response to the music (in this case karawitan) that originates from the person’s own art and cultural background (Johan 2010: 129). Therefore, the idioms of performance of the gender barung can only be understood, digested, and accepted by the community to which the culture belongs or those who have a special interest in Javanese karawitan.

Whatever the function of gamelan (karawitan) in the performing arts, whether primary or secondary, if the gender barung is included in the performance, it will create the best possible aesthetic. In general, a gender player will not take into consideration the function of the performance at the actual time, whether it is purely as concert music or part of another art performance. There may be a slight difference if the gender player knows that the performance is purely for the enjoyment of the audience, in which
case he will play more carefully. In order to develop the correct aesthetic, one of the most important aspects is to have a good command of technique. This will enable or guide the player to the best possible aesthetic. Many learners ignore the importance of a good technique of playing or damping the gender, and as a result they are unable to achieve the best aesthetic.

In order to play well, a gender player must first master the necessary interpretation of pathet, garap, and idioms of Javanese karawitan that are commonly used in the performing arts, and primarily in karawitan. Equally important is a good command of gendhing repertoire and gender repertoire, including a good knowledge and variety of cengkok and wiled. A performance will be more meaningful if the gender player can interact with the other instruments or musicians. In this case, the interpretation of a gendhing by all the other musicians is extremely important for the gender player in determining his choice of cengkok and wiled. The aesthetic of a karawitan performance is built upon the momentary musical communication between the musicians. In addition, the aspects of lara and jangkah also contribute to the aesthetic that is created by the gender itself.

References