Narratives Beyond the Exotic Paradise

Olga Witte, paper presented in GRS, Bergen, June 2022 (edited in 2023)

Introduction

In this paper I explore different forms of translations and interpretations of musical practices, principles, and structures, and the use of such translations, and interpretations as compositional devices transferring them from one cultural tradition to another and thereby creating new musical sounds and new narratives of place and space. I will discuss the importance of learning other's musics by doing ethnomusicological fieldwork with the aim of using the music in one's own compositions.

Why bother with these reflections

Giving this topic so many thoughts I have many times asked myself why it is important for me to think about musical translation and interpretation, and why it is important for me to make music with these reflections in mind.

Already at the age of 20 I was conscious that I wanted my music to have a different sound than the modern standard jazz and bebop I mainly played at the time. I moved towards experimental jazz influenced by contemporary music. As 24-year-old I had a course in ethnomusicology and heard a recording of Balinese gamelan for the first time, and I was drawn to it. After a preliminary trip to Indonesia in 2003, in 2005 I arrived on my first ethnomusicological fieldwork in Bali, and since then I have been 1½ year in Bali doing fieldwork among gamelan musicians in the area Kecamatan Sukawati. I have more and more absorbed the music in the field and experimented using different elements from gamelan integrated with experimental jazz at home. Thereby I have created a new musical universe, closing in on a musical expression I want.
More generally spoken; using different forms of translations and interpretations of other musics in one's own musical setting can create novel music that breaks away from the habits of the music we play.

Another, and equally significant answer is, that I truly believe that music is able to move people engaging in it; expressed with the words of Martin Stokes, "[m]usic does not then simply provide a marker in a prestructured social space, but the means by which this space can be transformed" (Stokes 1994/1997: 4). Therefore, it is important for me to create music that I believe makes the world a little better. Creating music with elements from Balinese gamelan that can let the listeners imagine other cultural practices than they are used to, understanding that other parts of the world have something important to offer to the West, and sound (as a verb) nuances to the still pervasive dualism between The West and The Rest. Creating music with the use of different forms of translation of Balinese gamelan in a musical setting more known to the audience will help the listeners acknowledge a narrative of a Bali beyond an exotic flavor of paradise to a Western superior world view.

The sound of the exotic Bali

Since the 1930's Bali has in Western Europe and North America held a picture of being an exotic Paradise (Vickers 2012/1990; Yamashita 2009; Spiller 2008/2004), and even though the image is continually changing, in general it persists. This image is connected to the Dutch colonial idea in the beginning of the 20th century of Bali as an anthropological living museum (Vickers 2012/1990: 18; 133). Such a generalization denies the existing complexities (Barth 1993). Bali is in many ways the essence of the West's exotic Other, and the persistent generalization is a manifestation of the split between The

West and The Rest, a generalization that pervades music, where "ethnic music" is understood as "the West's ethnic others" (Feld 2000: 147) in a generalized and essentialized sense, letting the "relationship of the colonizing and the colonized thus remain generally intact in distinguishing *music* from *world music*." (ibid.). Creating music with elements from Balinese gamelan that can let the listeners imagine other places acknowledging the value of other parts of the world, and sound (as a verb) nuances to the still pervasive dualism between The West and The Rest (Staszak 2009). To do so it is pivotal to move beyond the stereotypical sound of the exotic Other. Creating music with the use of different forms of translation of Balinese gamelan in a musical setting more known to the audience will help the listeners acknowledge a narrative of a Bali beyond an exotic flavor of paradise to a Western superior world view.

I see and hear this split and generalization in connection with world music in my everyday life in Denmark; when a saxophone player in a big band in my hometown by others and himself half joking is called "ethnic sax guy" because his ability to play kaval flute amongst others and some Bulgarian music, and he is offered to student arrangers "if you want an ethnic sound". Ethnic is here understood as "the West's ethnic others" (Feld 2000: 147) in a generalized and essentialized sense.
Steven Feld writes about "the binary reproduction by the world music concept" (Feld 2000: 147), where Western (art) music is split from the rest of the world's music, letting the "relationship of the colonizing and the colonized thus remain generally intact in distinguishing *music* from *world music*." (Feld 2000: 147), and he poses that the categories world music recordings are amongst others sold as "exotic" and "ethnic" (Feld 2000: 147).
So, if Bali is generalized as an exotic Other then how does that Other sound in the ears of the West?

Each time I have set foot in the airport in Bali, gamelan has filled the air, gamelan is presented in hotel lobbies, there are tourist performances with Balinese gamelan and dance in restaurants and other venues, and in guidebooks gamelan is marked as the music of Bali. Visitors coming to Bali can hardly miss the sound of gamelan. Westerners who haven't been there would not necessarily know the sound of gamelan. Most, if not all, though will be able to hear Otherness in the sound of gamelan, especially in the sound of the instruments.

Musical communication and the exotic sound

For a composer wanting to convey or not convey certain elements, it is pivotal to be aware of the listener and their listening abilities, and this most certainly accounts for me working with Bali so easily essentialised. I need to be aware of who I suppose my (primary) audience will be, and the cultural practices that will shape the way they listen. Listening and the following interpretive moved will be different from person to person, but there will also be common traits. This is expressed in e.g. the strong sense of agreement about the extramusical categorizations in musicologist Philip Tagg's survey of film music (Tagg 1999). It is because of this shared understanding of what music connotes, the connection between signifier and signified) that film music "works", and we know what a scene is "about" musically. Especially the sound of instruments and other easily hearable traits such as scales and melodic movements are strong signifiers pointing towards stereotypes.
The sound of the instruments will be the most easily recognized signifiers in a music. Martin Stokes (1997/1994: 9-10) writes that in an Irish Session in Northern Ireland a guitar wasn't welcome at all because it denoted The English for the Irish playing in the session, the instrument itself was the main carrier of national identity, not what the person intended to do with the instrument. The focus from both my locutors in Bali and in Denmark on instruments the same recognizability of instruments, and you can recognize it yourself: imagine the sound of a bag pipe or a mbira and you can probably localize that music straight away, but scales can also be strong signifiers. Imagine again the mbira, now playing

several notes, and you are even more clearly locked into the place. In other words, the listener can easily localize or associate the music by the sound (or look) of the instrument.
Scales and melodic movements can also be strong signifiers. I hear people talk about major phrygian scale sounding "Arabia" or being an "exotic scale", and composers Ravel and Puccini imitating the far east making melodies in a pentatonic scale with certain stylistic elements, creating what composer Steven Reich calls "chinoserie". (Reich 2000/1973: 70).

Musical processes

Ethnomusicologist Steven Feld (2005) argues that music is communication, and the focus must be on the process, and, since it is relational, on the sender and receiver. Music is socially constructed both in its creation and in its reception. Historically and socially situated composers and musicians construct the musical objects, and socially situated listeners interpret them. The interpretation is thus not just taken out of thin air, both socio-cultural and personal experiences is defining for the listener's interpretations of the musical objects. The receiver is actively interpretating the music, though not necessary consciously, making what Feld calls interpretive moves; she localizes, categorizes, associates, reflects and evaluates the musical objects. Each listening experience will be different since this new experience becomes a part of the listeners baggage. For the same reason through a listening experience the listener will continually tune in and change awareness. The listener focusses and lock in, and thus the frame of the listening experience is not static, but constantly evolving.
The focus in musical communication shall not only be on the sender and receiver but must also be on the sound object, both on the form and the content of the sound object. Communication in music is in the dialectics between "form and content, stream and information, code and message, culture and behavior, production and reception, construction and interpretation. Communication is neither the idea nor the action but the process of intersection whereby objects and events are, through the work of social actors" (Feld 2005: 78).
Through the listening process and in the setting/framing of the music the listener will attend and disattend to different sound objects, and the listener will engage in the music by foregrounding and backgrounding different traits in the music. Building on conversations about and observations of music, easily recognizable, but yet "different", as unfamiliar "exotic" sounding instruments or scales will be, the listener will give attention to that.
Hearing the sounds of gamelan, the listener will most probable make a locational interpretive move signifying Bali, or more generalized Otherness or an exotic paradise. Because of the clear code, the sound of the Other, the listener gives this extramusical trait attention, almost as a pedestrian need to give attention to a car honking (Feld 2005: 83). This attention and interpretation take part in the framing of the music[1], and this framing again is important for the listeners interpretive moves. An interpretive move focusing on the exotic will frame the ongoing listening process, the following interpretive moves will be affected by this. With the exotic in the foreground the music might not be taken in by the listener as something that could show new possibilities for the listener (Turino 1999; 2008). With the exotic sound being in front and given the main attention other musical aspects will move to the back and be given less attention, and the stereotype will be upheld.

When a listener in this way fast localizes (parts of) the music because of instruments or other easily recognizable elements, my suggestion is that this interpretive move foreground the location so much that other musical and extramusical elements goes by with little notice. Instead, the music can bring the

[1] Feld follows anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1972) and sociologist Erwin Goffman (1974)

West it's Last Temptation (Aubert 2007: 53), the taste of something exotic and the possibility of confirming an image the listener already holds.
Using instruments or other "stock" sounds will thus underpin the romanticized narrative of Bali as a paradise, and it will not deeply change the music, as Reich proposes the usage of structures from others' musics can. The easily recognizable elements could let the music be a domestication of the exotic Other, taking control of this Other in a safe space in an e.g., Danish concert hall as an interesting flavor to the audience.

How do I create narratives beyond the exotic paradise

So how I avoid underpinning the narrative of Bali as the Exotic Other while still using Balinese gamelan and surrounding cultural practices in my music and instead make music that moves beyond this, and hopefully even let people experience the potential a different way of living. Instead of the sound of "exotic instruments" I suggest using structures, principles, and practices.
Using instruments that for the listener is localized as "home" the listener might not give so much attention to the locality and therefore by attending other elements in the music can hear new possibilities. The music can as an anthropological monograph translate and interpretate the researched musical practice and present what ethnomusicologist Michelle Kisliuk and her student Kelly Gross call the "it" of the music (Kisliuk and Gross, 2004).
The Ba'Aka music and dance group that Kisliuk and Gross respectively teaches and takes part in have shifted perspective from "from sound object to sociomusical interaction" (Kisliuk and Gross 2004: 253) and thus presenting a different layer of the music and they state: "it becomes clear that the goal is not *imitation* but *interpretation*" (Kisliuk and Gross 2004: 253).
Because BaAka music and dance is so improvisatory, it seems inevitably to have such a focus, but with more fixed music, as Balinese gamelan, where the "urtext model" would be possible the "it" found in the interpretation of the sociomusical and will help the listener into this new universe.

In Steven Felds second edition of his monograph on Kaluli aesthetics *Sound and Sentiment* (1990/1982), he adds a postscript, where he discusses his informants' reaction to his book. He comes up with three terms from Kaluli; "turn around" is in this case by his informants used for a term first stated in Kaluli and then in English (translation), but normally they use it "in poetic meta-language to refer to a text copied in terms of major imagery but reformulated with new place names and minor imagery. This kind of "turning around" is a compositional strategy for recycling poignant poetic phrases while dressing them up enough to have a fresh impact that bears the mark of their singer and composer" (Feld 1990/1982: 247). Turn around is thus a translation acknowledging that changes happens when a new person (or a new language) take over a certain sound, word, or trait.
Feld writes how it made sense to his informants that there was more English than Kaluli in his monograph, "because they assumed that even once the Kaluli is directly translated ("turned around") it would take a long time to reveal ("turn over") all the relevant meanings ("underneaths")." (Feld 1990/1982: 248). Where "turn around" is translation on the same level, "turn over" is finding the "underneaths", the deeper meaning, an interpretation.

As an ethnomusicologist, translation, as" turn around", and interpretation, as "turn over" revealing the "underneaths", is a pivotal part of one's work. Just as an anthropological or ethnomusicological monograph would tell about both the empirical lives of the ones studied, translations, interpretations, analysis, synthesis and conclusions, in a similar way, I would, if I was writing music for an exhibition about Bali, present both the sound of the music, the setting, and through analyzation, translation and

interpretation find out the underneaths of the music and instead of a conclusion present this conclusion as a musical way of being-in-the-world.
Creating my own compositional world, my expression is freer, but still, it is important for me both to "turn around" and "turn over" parts of Balinese gamelan and the surrounding society and present it in my music.
To be able to translate and interpretate the music into another music analogous to the work of and ethnomusicological monograph learning the music is equally important as in an ethnomusicological project (Barz and Cooley 2008). Much can be read in books but to internalize and absorb a basically bodily knowledge, understanding the sociomusical creating new analysis about this field, learning by doing ethnomusicological fieldwork is necessary. As Kisliuk and Gross writes "embodied experience gives the students an awareness of issues involved in matters of "here" and "there"" (Kisliuk and Gross 2004: 253).
To affect my compositions in a more substantial way, to widen the audience's horizons, and to present a more complex and less stereotypical narrative about Bali than the main narrative of Bali as a paradise and the exotic Other, the matter of learning, knowing, and translating the music is essential.

Composing translations and interpretations

I have worked with Balinese gamelan using small elements from it for years, but with my debut album last year, Olga Witte Organ Trio No 1 +2, I have more systematic used it as one of my main elements in the music. I will exemplify with this to explain my method.

My second organ trio is build upon the Indonesian story of the mighty witch, Calon Arang. In the movement Evil Stalks the Land (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YsYdafY6eKc&list=PLw7lbZuq4NjyupJG06UxKVNhHgMWo_sbA&index=8) I depict two different scenes. The one is the king marching towards the village of Dirah, where Calon Arang lives, with the intention of killing Calon Arang, and the other is Calon Arang's apprentices praying and offering to Durga, the Goddess of destruction, through dance. In the Calon Arang performances I have watched in Bali, mainly in Sukawati, in the beginning of the evening's performance Calon Arang's disciples dance very controlled in synchrony, as most Balinese collective dancers do. Later in the story when they pray to Durgafor Calon Arang to become even more powerful, the apprentices dance individually and unlike the norm. They let their hair loose and dance with their heads downfaced with the hair in front of them as it is described also in the oldest manuscript of Calon Arang (Bandem and DeBoer 1995: 112). In my musical translation of this I let the two saxophones play in strict unison in the beginning and then they move further and further away from each other, in the ending sounding wild and totally individual. This is a translation, a "turn around" but it also connected to an "underneath" of how egalitarianism is understood as good and sticking out is evil. In this instance I am not at all sure that the underneath will be understood by the Western audience, but the two different elements of likeness and difference comes clearly to the fore.
The other part of the piece is the organ playing an ostinato that is shortened through the piece. In fighting scenes in Balinese drama the gong cycles that is fundamental to gamelan are short. I turn this around into an ostinato that is shortening portraying the intensification of the marching army who will fight Calon Arang.

One of the most striking elements of Balinese gamelan is the interlocking patterns. These fast patterns must be played precisely for the orchestra to sound and feel good for both musicians and listeners. This demands a strong focus on the collective and it also produces a good chance of communitas, a shared we (Witte 2009; Turino 2008). Through fieldwork it has become clear to me that the interlocking

patterns are strongly connected to collectivity. Therefore, I use interlocking patterns in a way, so I both translate them as "turn arounds" letting musicians play interlocking patterns differently arranged, and do it in a way to that should be clear to the listeners, even though they don't know the Balinese practice, that it demands a collective effort. This can be heard in Organ Trio No 1: Prestissimo (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoMAaFCZjWs&list=PLw7lbZuq4NjyupJG06UxKVNhHgMWo_sbA) and No 2: Ratna Menggali's Marriage, Theft of the Book of Spells, and the Last Fight (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKGaQUNIUys&list=PLw7lbZuq4NjyupJG06UxKVNhHgMWo_sbA&index=10).
Collectivity is such an important aspect in gamelan and the surrounding society, I would say one of the most important "its", that I present it in different ways e.g., in the out-of-time but unison melodies next to interlocking patterns in Prestissimo, as it is normal in a gong kebyar (ex.: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldPMifPbngc). These melodies demand a lot of rehearsal and not least connection with the other musicians and thus demand a collective mindset, and both in the interlocking patterns and here I believe that it is possible to hear this collectivity, also for a non-Balinese.
In the beginning of Please Crawl Out My Eyelid, Andante (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RknNGCkCEiU&list=PLw7lbZuq4NjyupJG06UxKVNhHgMWo_sbA&index=1), the trombones playing with the tuning, creating interference is a translation of the principle of *pengumbang* and *pengisep* where all instruments are paired and tuned slightly different so they create a shimmering effect. Instruments in tune sound dead according to the Balinese. Again the collective is needed (at least in most cases), and also in this case with the trombones moving in and out of tune I think it is possible to hear the collectivity.
The difference between turn-around/translation and turn-over/interpretation can be recognized here. The musical interpretation is an underlying meaning that several musical objects can signify.

Some translations show the aesthetic principle with no interpretation to deeper principles. But even aesthetic principles with no underlying meaning as such can create experiences in the listener where their minds are widening by acknowledging that there are other aesthetic principles than the ones the person grew up with.

In the movement Raja Erlangga (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKXl9A120eM) I created a melody of four notes. Some gamelan orchestras, such as baleganjur[2] that now adays is used mainly at cremations, competitions, and parades, but has historically been used as a military orchestra (Bakan 1999) has four tuned notes. The limitation of only four notes made me think differently in the compositional process and create new melodies and sounds. It is a "turn around" with no underneath to "turn over".
Likewise, is an element where the instruments playing an octave deeper play only (app.) half of the notes of the higher instruments, so the notes as composed in an inverted pyramid. I use this both in Raja Erlangga and in Calon Arang Becomes Matah Gede and Gives Birth to Ratna Menggali (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z91SkH3kcBM&list=PLw7lbZuq4NjyupJG06UxKVNhHgMWo_sbA&index=6). Both brings me new compositional methods and the listener new aesthetic insights.

In another movement I have chosen to imitate a sound but trying to stay away from the elements I have argued underpins the notion of Bali as the exotic Other. Composer and ethnomusicologist Sandeep Bhagwati (2019) writes about respectively artistic translation, where the meaning connected to a musical object where the sound is very different but the meaning is the same. Another type of translation is what he calls pata-translation, where a sound is transferred as directly as possible to

[2] Another type of gamelan, Angklung, also has only four notes.

another set of instruments, creating a "creative misunderstanding" (Bhagwati 2019: 3-4). I make such a pata-translation in the movement Empu Baradah (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1IyBRtxgDw&list=PLw7lbZuq4NjyupJG06UxKVNhHgMWo_sbA&index=7) where the organ imitates the sound of a *gentah*, the priest's bell, needed in ceremonies.

I almost do not make what Bhagwati calls artistic translations. For one because even though I build my second organ trio on the story of Calon Arang it is not that important to me that people understand the story just listening to the story.
One of my reviewers asked "if one with the same piece can "widen the listener's horizons" and tell a comprehensible story" (https://seismograf.org/kortkritik/orgelhekserier), and I follow his doubt. Making the story comprehensible in sound would need that I use sounds the listener already know and can make sense, as Bhagwati expresses: "Artistic traditions are based on such convention-based languaging [as a verb] – some of you have been conditioned to feel the rasa [object connected to a sign] of sadness when they hear a certain chord combinations (a bhava [a sign]) in a piece by Brahms. When Indian classical music lovers hear certain pitch combination in a raag-improvisation (a bhava), they are accustomed to feel the rasa of arousal. From this premise, artistic dictionaries of bhava-s can develop a network of connections between all these bhava-s, a multiplex grammar of aesthetic meanings." (2019: 3). Thus, telling a comprehensible story would need using convention-based languaging. For me the significance of creating sounds I want, my own "private esperanto" (Bhagwati 2019: 3) in which I tell the story in a way that is comprehensible to me. The story has thus more been an inspiration to create a structure in my music and give me musical ideas, and it may not be understood by a Western (nor Balinese) audience.

There could be yet another reason why I don't do much artistic translation. Bhagwati's empirical area is Indian music and mine is Balinese. Balinese dancer, musician and choreographer I Wayan Dibia and lecturer on Bali Rucina Ballinger write about Balinese dance "With so many hand gestures, eye movements and stances, it is difficult to decipher the meaning. Balinese hand gestures are not storytelling movements as in East Indian dance; rather, they embellish expression of the body. All movements are done on both the tight and left sides to establish harmony and cohesion" (2004: 18). Balinese gamelan that is composed to dance and drama is closely connected to these visual performances, and the music will with a high certainty signify these dance and dramas, but instrumental pieces doesn't have meanings as such. Different instruments have different connotations, such as people describing angklung as a sad music because it is used solely at cremations. Because of this lack of commonly understood meaning in smaller components in the music, and a strong focus on the meaning understood as a turn-around, where musicians by iconicity link e.g., interlocking patterns in gamelan to threads being interwoven going towards "turn around" translations rather than artistic translations. In that way this project makes so much sense because it is integrated with Balinese gamelan and cultural practices. (Olga: Skal jeg bruge Becker & Becker 1981 her?)

Music sounding possibilities and presenting new realities

Ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino (1990; 1999; 2008) has created a theory of music building on Peircean semiotics. The musical sign (what Feld would call sound objects) is related to its objects (often the extramusical in Feld's terms, but it could also be to other musical objects/signs) either by iconicity (sounding like) or index (prior concurrent experience) or in some instances symbol (connections agreed upon, such as the meaning of the chord symbol G7).
Just as Feld, Turino also understands the listener as a culturally and historically situated being, that also has its own experiences. When as when you hear a certain song that you heard at your grandfather's

funeral, it reminds you of that and makes you cry. The same song might also remind you of your wedding, a chord change or a melodic line in it might sound like another song signifying something else, and thus by the multifaceted musical signs, the multiplicity of musical signs and because of semantic snowballing, the semiosis can be really complex and for a long time create energetic and emotional interpretants/effects in the listener, and thereby strongly affect and create identities in the listener.

Music can show possibilities, and it can be felt as real experiences. Turino writes that "[t]he arts are founded on the interplay of the Possible and the Actual can awaken us from habit. The arts – music, dance, rituals, plays, movies, paintings, poems, stories – are a type of *framed* activity where it is expected that the imagination and new possibilities will be given special license. As a result, the arts are a realm where the impossible or non-existent or the ideal is imagined and made possible, and new possibilities leading to new lived realities are brought into existence in perceivable forms." (2008: 17-18) The sound of a pipe organ, which for most Danes will point to something completely different that gamelan but semiotically dense (Turino 1999; 2008) because of its position in the church and therefore many rituals such as weddings and funerals, playing together with respectively two trombones and two saxophones which clearly are Western instruments are indices of a Western world. Presenting turn-around and turn-over version of the interlocking patterns and other aspects of gamelan they sound the possibility for something yet non-existent, both for the listener's own way of living, where the possibility of a stronger collective sense could be felt by the listener, with the notice in mind that I use inspiration from Balinese gamelan the listener might imagine that people from outside can bring good to the West, and also imagining a nuanced Bali than the stereotypical exotic paradise. Because of the instrumentation and sound closer to experimental jazz than anything else the listeners' frame is not in the direction of any exotic Other, and this, I suggest, makes the listener able to hear the structuring as a possibility for the listener herself, not just as something that could happen to others. This kind of music can thus take part in broadening the possibilities for the listener. Thereby the listener will be more open to listen to other worldviews.

Calon Arang

As stated, my second organ trio is built on the story of Calon Arang, a story that has fascinated Indonesians and outsiders for many years. It is a story dating from the 12th century, it is especially performed in South Bali, and is mandatory at every 420 days at each second *odalan* ("yearly" festival) in Pura Dalem (death tempel) in Sukawati and other places. It is also presented for national and international tourists in several scenes in the village of Batubulan[3]. The first fiction film set on Bali was a film shot in 1927 about the witch, Calon Arang, which according to Adrian Vickers nuanced the picture of Bali as "The Island of the Gods" with the "The Island of the Demons". (Vickers 2012/1990: 150). The most famous Indonesian writer, Pramoedya Anata Toer (1951), has written a book telling the story, Indonesian dancers and poets has presented versions, one of the being Teoti Hearty presenting an angle of Calon Arang being a victim of patriarchy (2006). My version Calon Arang partly follows Hearty to some extent, but here Calon Arang is angered by the patriarchy and wants to have power in equal to the men, and more specifically the king, Raja Erlangga.
So using such a known icon of Rangda (Calon Arang's form when she becomes the mightiest witch) could be the Other underlining a different stereotype of the (exotic) Other, though not as the paradise. I still use it is, in addition to the fact that I have loved the performances since I watched one for the first time in 2005, because witchcraft is an omnipresent condition in Bali (Barth 1993). A condition I have encountered since my first fieldwork as a reality of life in Sukawati. Rangda is a complex figure. She is a

[3] It was so until the coming of corona, during which the performance places shut down. How many that has survived and will be up and running again is still unknown.

mighty witch and the village protector (Dibia and Ballinger 2004: 74; Badem and DeBoer 1995: 110ff). She can be fiercely evil and at the same time a caring and loving mother. She has so many aspects and the story of her so many versions that she herself is a symbol of complexity. But for the Western audience she might just be a stereotype, and a witch in itself seems to be of great interest as an object, almost as an exotic Other. Yet I have chosen to write the story of her life, trying to convey the complexity of human life, as Dibia and Ballinger writes of Calon Arang: "The play ends with no victor. In true Balinese fashion, neither Rangda nor the Barong [Empu Baradah enters as the lion-dragon Barong Ket] is pure evil nor pure good." (2004: 74).

A further elaborating on this representation is that I have an agreement with a Balinese puppeteer who shall make my version of the story as a Balinese puppet-show, which I will record and make a music video of. He will present a version that must fit with my translation…. If a Western audience will understand this story is still not sure.

Is it just me that am overprotective?

Thinking much about the narrative of Bali I know for sure that many Balinese would think it a good idea to use whatever from their music that I wanted, bits and slices, larger chunks, instruments, play whole tunes. Those I have talked about transmission of music they are happy that someone wants to play their music. As the Javanese musician Hardja Susilo says "I am frankly honored that you guys are studying the gamelan, that you think it is a worthy subject… So, appropriate all you want." (Harnish et al 2004: 66) and ethnomusicologist Anne K. Rasmussen writes "My hang-up about playing the music of a people "whose blood doesn't flow in my veins" has pretty much dissipated after living I Indonesia researching Islamic musical arts for two years" (Rasmussen 2004, 217).
But it is not a fear of appropriating music or playing "other's" music that demands me to make these reflections but my need to present it in a way that will nuance the image of Bali, of the rest of the world, of our world view, and to make the world what I think will be a little better place.

Narratives of Bali – conclusion

Bali is for many the exotic fantasy of a paradise. The narratives I am trying to tell is elements such as collectivity, egalitarianism, witchcraft, dualism, and gender perspectives where I turn over (the underneath) the musical practices, interpreting them and finding ways to express this musically in an experimental jazz setting. I don't tell as nuanced a story of Balinese gamelan, as I would do in writing or talking ethnomusicological about Bali (Witte 2009; 2011). I mainly use underneaths I judge as "good" or interesting. Even though I have written e.g. about the relationship between egality and hierarchy in Balinese gamelan (Witte 2009, 2011) I have chosen to focus on the egalitarian part in my own music.

In addition to turning over the music, I turn around the musical material and I make pata-translations. These aesthetic expressions must be used with care not to end up in a stereotypical narrative, but it is important for me to present aesthetic elements of another music, that also can widen the listener's aesthetics. Writing melodies for only four notes changed my way of thinking melodically, but I cannot present a deeper layer of meaning about the practices of Bali. The pata-translation of the sound of the *gentah* (priest's bell) in the organ does not even show anything about the aesthetics because it is this creative misunderstanding, but it can give inspiration to create new sounds.

Presenting these different translations and interpretations musically in a setting not linked to Bali but with Western instruments with strong connotations sounds possibilities of different ways of being in

world ethically and aesthetically, and can thus both widen the audience's world view, create nuances in their understanding of Bali and opening a generalized understanding of the Other.

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