

Javanese Gamelan
Vocabulary & Concepts

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Instruments

Peking (Saron Panerus)	1 octave above the saron
Saron (Saron Barung)	Metallophone, keys over wooden trough resonator, played with one hand, one-octave range
Demung (Saron Demung)	1 octave below the saron
Gender Panerus	1 octave above the gender
Gender (Gender Barung)	Metallophone, keys over individual tube resonators, played with two hands, multi-octave range
Slenthem	Metallophone, similar to gender, but played with one hand, one-octave range
Bonang Panerus	1 octave above the bonang
Bonang (Bonang Barung)	Horizontally suspended medium-sized pot-gongs arrayed in two rows, played with two hands, two-octave range
Kenong	Horizontally suspended large-sized pot-gongs, played with one hand, one-octave range
Kempul	Vertically suspended medium-sized gongs, played with one hand, one-octave range
Gong Suwukan	Vertically suspended large-sized gongs, played with one hand
Gong (Gong Agung)	Vertically suspended large-sized gong, played with one hand, usually lowest-pitched instrument in entire set
Kethuk	Horizontally-suspended small-sized pot-gong, played with one hand
Kempyang	Two horizontally suspended small-sized pot-gongs, played with two hands, struck simultaneously
Kendhang	Horizontally suspended barrel-shaped hand drum
Rebab	Two-stringed bowed lute
Suling	End-blown bamboo flute
Gambang	Wooden-keyed 'xylophone', played with two hands, multi-octave range
Siter	Small zither, played with two hands, multi-octave range
Celempung	Large zither, played with two hands, multi-octave range

Terms (brief definitions)

Balungan	Melodic outline or contour of a piece of music, literally refers to skeleton or frame
Bentuk	Form of a piece of music
Buka	Opening phrase, played by solo instrument or voice
Bumbang	Individual resonator under an instrument key, often made of bamboo
Cengkok	Pattern, in terms of melodic or rhythmic phrase
Dhalang	Shadow Master, puppeteer who also directs musicians during a shadow play
Gatra	Metrical unit that corresponds to four strokes of the balungan
Gembyang	Octave, or playing technique in which octaves are sounded simultaneously on one instrument
Gendhing	A piece or composition, particularly in one of the traditional forms
Gerong	Unison male chorus
Gongan	Primary formal phrase of a piece, from one gong stroke to the next

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Imbal	Playing technique where two similar instruments (often sarons) play interlocking parts which form one composite part
Irama	Tempo and density combined; refers to the rhythmic relationship of instruments to the balungan, which changes in proportion to the tempo
Karawitan	Traditional gamelan music & related arts
Kenongan	Subsidiary formal phrase that subdivides the gong phrase, from one kenong stroke to the next
Kreasi Baru	Literally 'new creation', referring to a contemporary composition for gamelan, particularly one not in a traditional form
Lagu	Melody, or song
Laras	Tuning system
Mipil	Playing technique in which an instrument alternates on pairs of notes based on balungan
Pathet	Mode; also refers to time of day/night appropriate for certain modes, and sections within an all-night shadow play where certain types of action take place
Pathetan	Prelude and/or postlude to a larger piece that helps to set or reinforce the feel of the mode
Pelog	Seven-tone tuning system with larger and smaller intervals
Pencon	Gong or pot-gong with a raised knob in the center
Pin	Rest, notated as a dot or period
Pinjalan	Playing technique where two non-similar instruments (often slenthem & demung) play interlocking or complementary parts to form one composite part
Plesedan	Playing technique for the kenong where it anticipates the following kenong tone
Rancak	The case or rack of an instrument on or from which the keys or gongs are suspended
Sabetan	Metrical unit that corresponds to one stroke of the balungan
Seleh	Goal tone, usually corresponding to kenong or gong strokes
Seseg	To speed up
Sindhen	Solo female vocalist
Slendro	Five-tone tuning system with nearly equal intervals
Suwuk	To end, or the ending of a piece
Tabuh	Mallet used to strike an instrument
Tumbuk	The common tone between the pelog and slendro tuning systems of a set of instruments that contains both tunings; often pitch 5 or 6
Wayang	Shadow play, accompanied by gamelan
Wayang Golek	Shadow play with wooden rod-puppets
Wayang Kulit	Shadow play with flat buffalo-hide puppets
Wayang Orang	Stage play in which humans enact the puppet roles
Wilah	A slab-shaped key of a gamelan instrument

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Concepts (more in-depth explanations)

Balungan

Balungan mlaku – Balungan in which there are no rests or the rests are not in a regularly recurring pattern within the gongan.

Example:

6532 6532 .323 653⁽²⁾

Balungan nibani – Balungan where every other beat is a rest.

Example:

.3.5 .6.5 .6.5 .i.⁽⁶⁾

Balungan nggantung – Balungan where a single pitch is sustained over rests and/or repeated directly.

Example:

33.. or ..6.

Irama

Irama lancar – one stroke per balungan beat – fast tempo

Irama tanggung (irama 1) – two strokes per balungan beat – medium-fast tempo

Irama dados/dadi (irama 2) – four strokes per balungan beat – medium tempo

Irama wiled (irama 3) – eight strokes per balungan beat – medium-slow tempo

Irama rangkep (irama 4) – sixteen strokes per balungan beat – slow tempo

Pathet

Mode

Slendro

Nem six avoids 1 in gong position; stresses 2 (& 6) in gong position; generally lowest in register; common

cadence: 653⁽²⁾

Sanga nine avoids 3 in gong position; stresses 5 in gong position; generally middle in register; common

cadence: 216⁽⁵⁾

Manyura peacock avoids 5 in gong position; stresses 6 in gong position; generally highest in register; common

cadence: 321⁽⁶⁾

Pelog

Lima five stresses 1 & 5 in gong position; generally lowest in register; scale: 1 2 4 5 6; common cadence: 542⁽¹⁾

Nem six stresses 5 & 6 in gong position; generally middle in register; scale: 1 2 3 5 6; common cadence: 216⁽⁵⁾

Barang pitch 7 stresses 2 & 6 in gong position; generally highest in register; scale: 2 3 5 6 7; common cadence: 327⁽⁶⁾

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Examples:

Ladrang Pangkur in various pathet

Pelog Nem	2126	216 ⁵	6521	3216 ⁵	2321	5321 ⁵	3216	216 ⁵
Pelog Barang	3237	3276 ⁶	7632	5327 ⁶	3532	6532 ⁶	5327	3276 ⁶
Slendro Sanga	2126	2165	6521	3216 ⁵	2321	5321 ⁵	3216	216 ⁵
Slendro Manyura	3231	3216 ⁵	1632	5321 ⁵	3532	6532 ⁶	5321	3216 ⁶

Lancaran Udan Mas in various pathet

Pelog Lima	216 ⁵	216 ⁵	.656 ⁶	216 ⁵	3323 ⁶	1235 ⁶	.424 ⁶	216 ⁵
Pelog Barang	6532 ⁶	6532 ⁶	.323 ⁶	6532 ⁶	7567 ⁶	5672 ⁶	.765 ⁶	676 ⁵
Slendro Manyuro	6532 ⁶	6532 ⁶	.323 ⁶	6532 ⁶	1561 ⁶	5612 ⁶	.165 ⁶	616 ⁵
Slendro Sanga	5321 ⁶	5321 ⁶	.212 ⁶	5321 ⁶	6356 ⁶	3561 ⁶	.653 ⁶	565 ³

Time/mood

Slendro

Nem	9:00 PM – Midnight	Youthfulness, beginning of life
Sanga	Midnight – 3:00 AM	Maturity, desires, worldly interests
Manyura	3:00 AM – 6:00 AM	Old age, looking towards end of life

Pelog

Lima	6:00 AM – Noon	Melancholy, seriousness, religious devotion
Nem	Noon – 3:00 PM	?
Barang	3:00 PM – 9:00 PM	?

Wayang

Time	Pathet	Action/scene	Music
Overture	slendro manyuro	stylized setting of overall scene	-
9-12 PM	slendro nem	history, presentation of conflict	large forms, calm
12-3 AM	slendro sanga	battles prepared, topical interests	lighter, shorter forms
3-6 AM	slendro manyuro	battles, resolution, rebalancing	short forms, lively