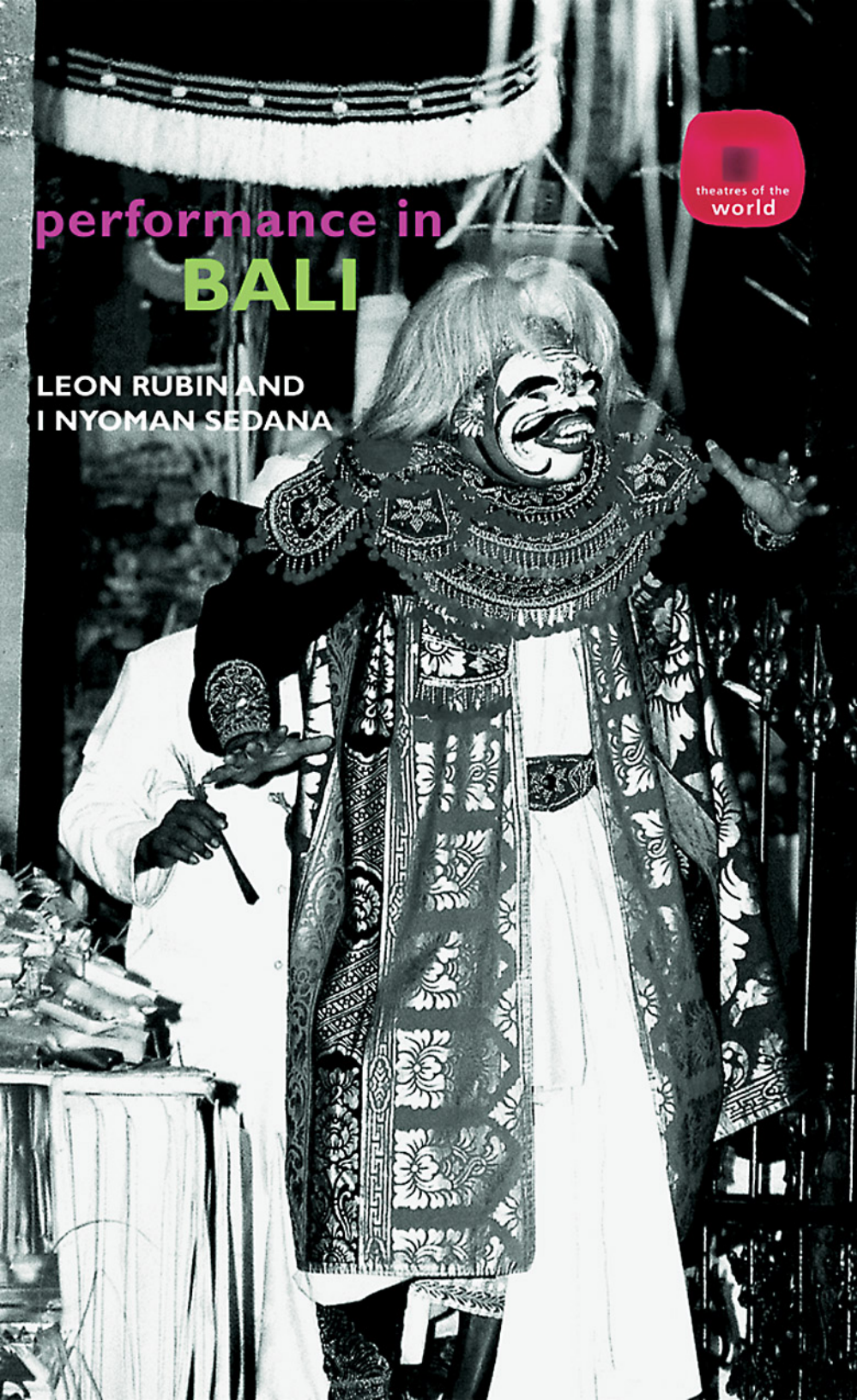


performance in  
**BALI**

LEON RUBINAND  
I NYOMAN SEDANA

theatres of the  
world



# Performance in Bali

*Performance in Bali* brings to the attention of students and practitioners in the twenty-first century a dynamic performance tradition that has fascinated observers for generations. Leon Rubin and I Nyoman Sedana, both international theatre professionals as well as scholars, collaborate to give an understanding of performance culture in Bali from inside and out.

The book describes four specific forms of contemporary performance that are unique to Bali:

- Wayang shadow-puppet theatre
- Sanghyang ritual trance performance
- Gambuh classical dance-drama
- the virtuoso art of Topeng masked theatre.

The book is a guide to current practice, with detailed analyses of recent theatrical performances looking at all aspects of performance, production and reception. There is a focus on the examination and description of the actual techniques used in the training of performers, and how some of these techniques can be applied to Western training in drama and dance. The book also explores the relationship between improvisation and rigid dramatic structure, and the changing relationships between contemporary approaches to performance and traditional heritage. These culturally unique and beautiful theatrical events are contextualised within religious, intellectual and social backgrounds to give unparalleled insight into the mind and world of the Balinese performer.

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# 1 Past and present

When the bomb exploded in the Sari Club in Legian Street, Kuta, Bali on 12 October 2002, a wave of anguish swept through Balinese life. Although, over the centuries, Bali had not been immune to great pain, violence and suffering, recent times had been peaceful and relatively prosperous within economically struggling Indonesia. The development of tourism through the 1980s and 1990s had generally established a peaceful life for most inhabitants. The bombing by Muslim extremists shattered that peace in many ways that are not all evident to the outsider. The bombing affected various levels of Balinese society, from the financial and political to the religious, cultural and philosophical. It was to the people of Bali as though the delicate and harmonious balance between good and evil had been destroyed. In the Balinese way of seeing the universe, good and evil always coexist. Throughout Balinese art, religion and philosophy there is constant reference to this idea of a balanced universe that recognises the existence of both forces, *rwa bhineda*. Unlike the dominant, simplistic Western concept of the need to defeat evil and divide the world between the good guys and the villains, the Balinese view is that evil spirits exist and that you need to deal with them, appease them, pacify them, distract them or transform them into good spirits, but you never defeat them. When an imbalance occurs and evil is strong in the world, you must create more good to regain the balance, and so goodness, temple ceremonies and religious duty to the community must all be increased as a response.

Most performance forms in Bali, apart from the completely secular, deal at some point with this fact of existence as part of the rituals with which they are connected. In response to the bomb outrage, many performances took place all over the island to amend the imbalance that had been caused. The evil spirits were dominating and had to be pacified and harmony had to be restored. Some of these performances were well documented in articles by academic observers as the extraordinary manifestation of art as a weapon against violence unfolded. Of course, the conventional military and police

## 2 Past and present

responses took place simultaneously, but the purification rituals of performances were considered as potent and important. Culture is a weapon in Bali (Jenkins and Catra, 2004: 71) and has historically been an important part of a defence strategy against the outside world. It is the powerful and enduring sense of cultural identity that has helped defend Bali from outside forces over the centuries. Bali is still the last tiny island that resisted the Muslim advance across Asia; the sweep across the Indonesian islands was stopped dead there. The remaining key Majapahit elite fled to join their relatives in Bali, as it was the region's final Hindu outpost of a lost culture. By the early sixteenth century, all Buddhist/Hindu areas had almost completely disappeared throughout what is now known as Indonesia, and Bali was the only remaining entity. The Majapahit Empire, itself a complex mixture of Buddhist and Hindu culture, had conquered Bali as early as 1343 and brought with it Buddhist and Hindu/Shiwa-related religion. It also brought the Ramayana and Mahabharata and the religious, philosophical and performance traditions. They integrated with the existing traditions to produce the rich culture that are present today.

When the Dutch empire colonised the region (finally achieved in 1891, after 50 years of treaties and battles), Bali offered the strongest resistance, including mass suicide (known in the history books as *puputan*), in the face of superior weaponry and a war that was impossible to win. The resistance was not just for the sake of political independence; the Balinese people also resisted because of a passionate desire to protect a deeply ingrained culture. When the Japanese invaded Bali, landing in Sanur on 18 February 1942, during World War II, many Balinese intellectuals and others welcomed the Japanese as an Asian controlling force that they thought would be more in sympathy with Balinese ideals; however, by the end period of the war they understood this was not the way Japanese rule worked. Although in the first period after the invasion the new colonial rulers were indeed sympathetic to Balinese social structures and culture, this sympathy fell away as the war turned against Japan and a much harsher rule took over.

Even the Dutch rulers recognised the unique exquisiteness of Balinese cultural identity and took steps to help preserve it, although their intentions were to keep Bali as a paradise island that was suitable for wealthy Dutch tourists. Numerous artists and anthropologists who made the pilgrimage to Bali popularised this exotic and mysterious paradise during the 1920s and 1930s. They wrote about and visually depicted the great culture from the past that still survived. The colonial implication existed that this was a fascinating but ultimately naïve and early civilisation clearly inferior to the modern European cultural environment. However, the Balinese, typically, learnt new ideas and skills from their foreign visitors/rulers and created numerous new styles and forms of visual and performing arts that retained



a powerful, central Balinese consciousness. The new forms did not replace but sat side by side with the traditional forms. Most tourists today witnessing the Kecak dance, performed daily for tourists, are blissfully unaware that the traditional, ancient ceremony/performance they are attending was choreographed by the German artist and choreographer Walter Spies in the 1920s, and that it was based on mixing together bits of different existing forms. The Balinese do not fear the present invasion of foreign tourists (that began during the Dutch rule and has mushroomed in recent years) because they possess an intense cultural confidence that permeates throughout their society. The Balinese people generally welcome, rather than reject, foreign influences and in some cases adopt them within their own sensibilities. They do not have the fear of losing their identity that is so common in many other cultures faced with overwhelming influences from globalisation. This ability to accept and adapt outside cultural influences alongside traditional Balinese arts and culture is explored throughout this book.

The purification ceremonies and performances stressed the need for the Balinese people to remember the lessons of the past – adhering to traditional principles of good behaviour, tolerance, community spirit and generosity had helped them recover from times of disaster and conflict. The Balinese retold stories that were both comic and deeply serious within various forms of drama. These stories served as reminders of their principles as they attempted to rebalance the harmony between good and evil. The possible hostile reaction towards Muslims did not materialise, and therefore the circles of revenge/hatred were not fuelled, in spite of the deliberate provocation. The Balinese were well aware that Bali had been targeted because it was a non-Muslim culture and was a doorway to the outside world.

These unique cultural responses to the bombing show many of the elements of Balinese life and thought that are at the heart of performance culture on the island. The focus on good and evil and balance is connected to many aspects of Balinese life. Evil spirits, *butha*, are represented in architectural relief, painting and performance masks. The Balinese believe the spirits are close to the ground or beneath the ground and always think of them in that context. Evil spirits can also be understood in more abstract ways – to many Balinese we have within us good and evil, manifested in mood and action, and this, too, is part of the universal balance between the two extremes. On the night before the lunar New Year, Nyepi, parades of huge effigies of the Butha Kala, the evil earth spirits, take place across Bali. People within each community create the figures, Ogoh Ogoh, some over ten metres high. Accompanied by firecrackers and banging of instruments and other objects, the Balinese parade the effigies through the villages to the seashore where they are generally burned. The idea is to show what the Butha Kala are like and then to distract them as they follow the giant effigies



#### 4 *Past and present*

and parade them away from the humans to the sea. Then, the next day, Nyepi, there is a day of silence throughout Bali. No one, not even tourists, is allowed out on the streets and electricity should not be used, even for lighting. An extraordinary silence and calm descends on the island from dawn until dawn the next day. The day of silence allows people to think about themselves and the past year and to reflect on how they should behave in the year to come. Some believe that the silence and darkness is to fool the Butha Kala into thinking that the island is uninhabited so they will fly away, but it is generally believed that it is a time to celebrate and relax after the spirits have gone away, at least for a while. This showing and placating of evil spirits is very present in many performance forms, including Sanghyang, Topeng and Wayang. In each case, the battles between good and evil and the restoration of balance at the end are strongly evident in the content and structure of the forms. Even in the best-known performance ritual battle between the Barong, a mythical creature who protects the villagers, and Rangda, the evil witch who threatens them, the performance culminates in the defeat of Rangda. She is not killed onstage but retreats offstage, weakened and unable to continue the fight. However, all the audience know that the victory is temporary and she will return another day. A simple resolution does not exist to the eternal conflict between good and evil.

The Ogoh Ogoh effigies also demonstrate another key aspect of Balinese performance and religious philosophy that concerns balance in another way: physical states of balance. Each dancing figure produces a kinaesthetic response to the observer, as though moving in space as it is carried along. One leg is usually raised and one arm is higher than the other to compensate and to bring the effigy into balance. These enormous figures seem light and in motion. This design is created deliberately to suggest this feeling of balance. All Balinese dance and dance-drama forms start with the same physical premise, as the performers constantly move from one side to the other and up and down finding points of balance, even as those points move elusively away. In this way, the dance continues as though the performer is almost falling from one position to another, rarely holding a point of balance but moving through it to the next. This constant motion and energy lies at the heart of Balinese performance and simultaneously relates to the more philosophical ideals of universal balance.

The concept of motion is also seen in the frequent reference in Balinese culture to the symbol of the swastika. Although in the West the crime of desecrating an important religious symbol can be added to the other Nazi war crimes, in Bali it remains sacred. The swastika is one of the oldest symbols known to man and has traceable origins back more than 3,000 years. It has been found in almost every major culture of the world and has different



Figure 1.1 Figures from the Ogoh Ogoh parade

meanings associated with it accordingly. However, in particular, it is sacred to both the religious cultures that dominate Balinese perceptions about art and philosophy – Hinduism and Buddhism. A number of connotations inform the understanding of the swastika to many Balinese and how it connects to performance. The first recorded use of the word itself is in the two epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The word swastika is derived from Sanskrit and different commentators explain its meaning in various ways. Most agree it indicates the idea of ‘good’ or ‘goodness’ from the root *su* and ‘existence’ or ‘being’ from the root word, *asti*. So, it is associated with good luck, eternity and well-being. The swastika is found frequently throughout the Hindu world, in particular adorning buildings and objects. In Bali, it can also be found in connection with cremation and suggests reincarnation and the circles of existence close to Hindu and Buddhist thought. Other symbolic associations relate to the visual make-up of this intriguing symbol, and some Balinese believe these are adopted into an understanding of performance theory. As an ideogram, the swastika has specific purposes imbedded within it and the symbol’s design is important. It can be looked at as a type of cross with the four central lines seen as indicators of North, South, East and West and the additional extending arms from each of these lines as indicators of the four remaining directions,

## 6 *Past and present*

North East, North West, South East and South West. In Balinese thought, these directions all have detailed meanings and connotations relating to religious concepts, and these concepts are frequently referred to in all Balinese art forms. In addition, the swastika suggests the idea of up and down and centre. The symbol also represents the central concept of balance and harmony as each section stands in opposition to another. So, it is often understood as representing good and evil, positive and negative, strong and weak, etc. It appears to be like a wheel, forever moving forward and rotating and is thought to be associated with an image of the sun (again suggesting life-force) and possibly a comet. No matter what the interpretation, the idea of powerful motion is important in relation to Balinese performance. Some, but not all, commentators think that performers, standing at the centre of the religious universe during temple performances, are the human embodiment of the same symbolic indicators. The human body's arms and legs represent the four extensions of the swastika. In all Balinese dance movements, the same sense of balance and continual circular movement is present, as seen in the symbol. Similarly, to the Balinese mind, the head is up and therefore sacred and close to the gods and heaven, *swah*; the feet are downward, pointing to *bbur*, the underworld where reside the darker, evil spirits. The central body is the human sphere between the two other worlds, *buwah*. So in this way, performers are also the embodiment of harmony in the universe as they narrate stories that often explore the same themes. The music that accompanies the dance/spinning of the wheel is music of the spheres, very much as the Elizabethan English audiences might have understood it.

This idea of the human being as a microcosm of the Balinese concept of the universe is also important as a prelude to understanding Balinese arts. It is also not so far from the Elizabethan understanding of the relationships between man and the universe and man and nature. The idea of direction orientation is intricately entwined with this universally in Bali, the shared understanding of the order that exists everywhere. The Balinese refer to this as *kaja* and *kelod*, 'towards the mountain and towards the sea'. However, it means so much more than this, as all Balinese cultural and religious existence extends this geographical concept to all areas of thought. The gods reside on the mountains, in particular the volcano Gunung Agung. Then comes the main fertile area of land below the mountains where man lives, and finally comes the sea for demons and evil spirits. Upward or North and North East are the holy directions and downward or South are towards the lower elements of the universe: from the holy to the evil and from heaven to hell. Although most of Bali North, where the great mountains are, coincides with *kaja*, the same *kaja* and *kelod* orientation is effective in other geographic locations, although North might be in a different place;

in other words the direction is strictly speaking towards the mountain or sea rather than due North or South. Carvings on buildings and doors and illustrated documents and paintings maintain this same order of gods at the top, man in the middle and beasts and demons at the foot. Man is linked to the rest of the chain of nature and the divine and knows his place as much as an Elizabethan would have done. All Balinese art and culture accept and understand this basic precept.

In addition to this central orientation, the other directions are also important and have specific significance. Each direction is associated with a different aspect of the Hindu concept of god/gods and each direction is also associated with a colour. Therefore, any reference in art to a direction automatically signifies a connection with the associated religious concepts. Similarly, colour in art, costume etc. has a specific meaning in relation to those same directions. There is a parallel association in the Elizabethan age between references to physical space and specific, universally understood or shared cultural responses; in other words, the Elizabethan world view and the Balinese world view have much in common in relation to a generally held conception of the way of universal order. This is true also of the idea of universal disharmony when the natural order is upset, whether it be the turbulent, unnatural storms in *King Lear* or *Julius Caesar* or the aftermath of the bombing in 2002. In all these examples, the actions of humans and the consequences of these actions in the natural world are eternally linked. The Balinese idea of purification rituals, so often related to performance, is to reset the balances in the universe and stop the evil spirits from dominating our existence.

The Elizabethan world view also connects to the idea of architecture as a source of philosophical/religious inspiration and exposition. In the Balinese world view, this is developed in extraordinary detail and with significant meaning at all levels. Traditional Balinese homes are designed as part of the same understanding of directional orientation. The layout of the individual house and family compound mirrors concepts indicated in the discussions about the compass. The position of each part of the house and compound reflects the qualities connected to each of the directions and always follows the *kaja* and *kelod* rules. The holiest directions are North and North East (where the sun rises) and therefore this is always the position of the family shrine or temple, *sanggah*. This area is walled off from the rest of the compound with an entrance near the building (*bale*) where the head of the family lives. In the *kelod* direction, the South, and somewhat towards the West, lie the lowest sections of the compound where the family keeps animals and deposits waste. In the middle territory is the cluster of buildings for sleeping. The head of the family always sleeps in the building closest to the *kaja* end of the compound. The kitchen will also be in the *kaja*

section of the compound. All beds are aligned with the head towards kaja, and many Balinese feel uncomfortable even when overseas without this correct bed position. Even more complex than the layout of the compound are the proportions and measurements for each building and the distance between them. This is all precisely detailed as rules known as Asta Kosali Kosali. This book is not the place to describe the meticulous details of construction required for a traditional compound, temple or indeed entire village, and the inquisitive reader will find a full account in the book *Sekala and Niskala* (Eiseman, 1990b: 190–2); however, what is important to understand is the link with the human body that makes this relevant to understanding performance. The proportions of the buildings are all determined by calculations based on the size of the body of the head of the family, as the buildings are a microcosm of the same cosmic and human order already described. Taking the measurements requires the head of the family to stretch out his arms as far as possible to each side in a way that is strangely reminiscent of the drawing of *Vitruvian Man* by Leonardo da Vinci, a diagrammatic attempt to determine proportion and harmony using the human body. The first and most important measurement the architect takes before commencing calculations for designing the buildings is the distance between the tips of the middle fingers of each hand in this outstretched position. Another measurement – taken in the same position – is the distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger. These figures added together, plus another finger measurement, form the basis for determining the length of all walls. Other measurements of fingers determine the calculations for constructing support pillars or posts, etc.

The same systems of orientation and placement are used for designing temples and indeed the entire village. The Balinese people know exactly where they are in relation to all the elements that surround their physical and spiritual lives. Patterns of layout in the different villages add to the sense of cultural security – even when away from the home village, orientation is almost immediate. Every temple has an inner, middle and outer courtyard and every village usually has the three temples: the middle one is the main village temple, the Pura Desa, dedicated to Brahma the creator; in the kaja direction is the Pura Puseh temple, dedicated to Wisnu the preserver, usually associated with water as the source of life; in the *kelod* direction is the Pura Dalem, dedicated to Siwa or his wife who is usually known as Durga. This final temple is used as a cemetery and ceremonies concerned with death.

Each of the three sections or courtyards in the temples has a specific function and all of them host performances as part of ceremonies; the rules allow certain types of performance according to the space. The inner area, *jeroan*, is the most sacred space and is separated from the other two areas by a wall. Only the most sacred performance forms, *wali*, are allowed there

such as Sanghyang, Rejang or Baris Gedé. The middle area, *jaba tengah*, is thought of as semi-sacred and is mainly used for certain prayers and preparation of offerings. This is where *bebali*, or semi-sacred forms of performance, take place, such as Gambuh, Wayang Wong or Topeng Pajegan. The outer courtyard, that to an outside observer looks as though it sometimes is not even part of the temple, is secular and a place to talk and eat or play and where secular entertainment, *balih balihan*, can take place, such as Topeng Panca, Legong or Arja. Although commentators on performance in Bali generally accept these distinctions, like everything else in Balinese traditions exceptions exist that seem to break the rules as circumstance, time and place determine what exactly is appropriate at a moment in time. Topeng Pajegan could be performed in the inner courtyard for example, if the specific need arose. Similarly, a performance that is usually sacred might be performed in a secular or semi-secular environment or might be performed for an occasion somewhere else. In that situation, the Balinese view is that the form may be the same, but by circumstance and place, the actual performance is non-sacred if the conditions do not allow. This flexibility is important to understand when looking at all aspects of Balinese culture and tradition: that which seems rigid can have subtle and sometimes major variations that defy attempts to categorise.

In addition to home compounds and individual temples, entire villages conform to the same rules of directional orientation and patterns of design, so that the temple is a microcosm of the village and that itself is a microcosm of the universal order within the religion. Each village has three temples, one each for the three temples geographically placed in the appropriate relationship to each other and the village as a whole. Within these philosophical and religious rules and order, a large number of theatrical performance forms exist. In general, the forms are connected to the temples and the cycle of festival and ceremonies that follow the Balinese calendar. The Balinese have evolved a sophisticated calendar system based around three different calendar cycles, one of which is the Western/Gregorian calendar. The other two are the Saka, related to lunar calculations and focusing in particular on the full and dark moon dates, and the Pawukon 210-day calendar. The latter, to the outsider, is the most confusing of all as it is divided into ten separate week-systems and they all run concurrently. The weeks differ in numbers of days and each week has a different name so that any one day known as a Gregorian calendar date could have multiple names according to the different length weeks! The actual calculations needed to determine the correct date for an event in the temple, or indeed outside for secular purposes, is beyond most Balinese and is usually undertaken by a trained priest. The auspicious or lucky days, *dewasa luwung*, are when the different cycles of the variable weeks in the calendar coincide. The Pawukon

calendar is most important for determining temple and, consequently, performance dates.

The emphasis on lunar, numerical and cyclical calculation relates to strong beliefs, some pre-Hindu, in magic and superstition in general. Along with their Elizabethan counterparts, the Balinese frequently invoke numbers in connection with mystical events. The tripartite patterns already described in this chapter are just a small example of use of certain numerical structures ingrained in Balinese thought and life. Various other key numbers also affect religious thinking in many aspects of daily life. The Elizabethan Dr Dee and his counterparts would have understood well how numbers and numerical systems have magical power and link man to the celestial bodies. Once the priests have determined auspicious days, preparations for elaborate ceremonies begin. The preparations are extremely detailed, labour intensive and time consuming as many offerings and practical organisational plans have to be made. In fact, the life of temple ceremonies dominates much of everyday life in Bali as religious duty takes precedence over most other aspects of everyday life. Performances are always within ceremonies, so that performance culture itself is deeply rooted in everyday life. A strong involvement with performance exists throughout temple ceremonies, making it close to most people's hearts, even the very young. In Bali, performance is not seen as entertainment separate from temple life, although the idea of entertainment is completely in harmony with performance culture's religious function. Dance, dance-drama, puppetry and mask dance entertain the audiences and the gods at the same time, with no tension between the two roles.

Some of the most holy performance forms have pre-Hindu origins and strong magical connections, and trance in particular is an important aspect of these performances. Trance is fully entwined in various aspects of Balinese culture including religious devotion, artistic endeavour and medicine. *Balian* (healers), for example, are a strong and accepted part of traditional Balinese life. A *balian* will enter trance and communicate with spirits, through possession, in order to find the source of evil that is thought to be causing illness. Trance is not generally considered a frightening or extraordinary occurrence within Balinese culture and is as accepted by most people as sleep is to people in the West: both are freely allowed altered states of consciousness in which an individual voluntarily gives up a fully conscious state to an altered state. Some Balinese, however, are not comfortable with the idea of giving up control of the body to an external spirit that could misuse the body; to many Balinese Hindus the body is sacred and connected to the gods. In general though, trance is part of the normal cycles of life, and in certain holy performances it is an essential element that can connect the lives of people in a village to the gods. The trance medium or performer



acts as a bridge between the heavenly and earthly world and thereby becomes a conduit for spirits to descend in order to give knowledge/advice (as described in detail in Chapter 3).

Within this framework of belief lie many performance forms; appreciating or even beginning to understand Balinese performance out of this context is impossible. Although secularised versions of dance and dance-drama have evolved in Bali, they still retain deep links to the ceremonial roots; outside observers can enjoy the highly developed aesthetics in their own right, but they will only understand a small part of the overall form. The list of performance forms is rich, but in most cases the different forms are branches from a few central root forms that are explored in the other chapters of this book. The Balinese adapt and create new styles and forms of performance and other arts continually, but these works are not created in a vacuum and, in general, the idea of innovation is different from that of many Western cultures. Creativity in parts of the West is connected often to the concept of a break from tradition rather than the Balinese idea of an evolution of tradition. In Balinese arts, the individual is free to explore and to offer new approaches to any performance, while always retaining an understanding and respect for the roots and past creations. The artist contributes something new to, adds on to, extends or reinterprets an existing model; this can be radical and may involve borrowing from other cultures, but essentially it is an evolution of ideas/content from the past. In these ways, creativity itself is mainly concerned with the originality of arrangement of existing constituent parts and sections of a form in addition to some new elements. It is for this reason that the details of performance are so important; it is not possible to understand the creative process at work in any Balinese performance without first confronting the long lists of specific factors that the performer is concerned with. At any moment during a performance, these complex elements are, in effect, being juggled in order to find new meaning and understanding. Training involves mastering the technique of existing performance forms but simultaneously encourages performers to find their own artistic and individual voice/style within that framework. This individual development of the performer, therefore, also involves creative/experimental and exploratory approaches.

A brief survey of performance types in Bali could be represented in two main ways. One could be a family tree that shows the three main root forms: Sanghyang, Wayang Kulit and Gambuh (each dealt with in separate chapters of this book) and their descendant forms such as Wayang Wong from Wayang Kulit, Topeng from Gambuh, etc. However, this rapidly gets complicated as it becomes clear that over the centuries new forms evolve from influence by multiple forms rather than a single earlier form. The other method, as follows, is through the usually accepted groupings of sacred,

semi-sacred and secular. However, although this is simpler to describe, this too is inaccurate as some forms jump between categories according to the situation and the forms themselves divide into sub-forms appropriate for different functions; Topeng can be found, for example, in sacred and secular circumstances. An additional category of 'other' is necessary too! So, the list is neither comprehensive nor precise, but it reflects generally held views on what constitutes main performance genres in Bali. The list does not include the many variations of forms and the full range of ritual genres sometimes described as magical performances.

### **Sacred**

- Berutuk:** An ancient rare fertility-related drama, rarely performed, only in one village, Trunyan, in the north of Bali.
- Sanghyang:** A trance, purification ceremony and dance, rarely performed, mainly in the Kintamani region in the north of Bali (see Chapter 3).
- Baris Gede:** A military-inspired dance by a group of male performers, associated especially with the Odalan temple ceremony. Non-sacred variations with different names exist.
- Rejang:** Processional dance by a group of female performers, frequently performed throughout Bali for numerous temple ceremonies.
- Wayang Lemah:** Translated as 'daytime puppet', this is a sacred version of performance, parallel in many ways to Wayang Kulit (see Chapter 2) but does not use a shadow screen and is played for the gods rather than a human audience.
- Topeng Pajegan:** One-man masked performance (see Chapter 5). Other connected forms use more performers.
- Mendet:** Performed by pairs of male dancers, mainly for the Odalan ceremony.
- Gabor:** Female equivalent to the Mendet dance, also performed in pairs.

### **Semi-sacred**

- Gambuh:** The oldest known classical dance form, performed at many ceremonies (see Chapter 4).
- Wayang Kulit:** The ancient shadow-puppet genre that is also a root for many other performance forms.
- Wayang Wong:** Derived in part from Wayang and Gambuh, the performance centres on stories from the Ramayana. The

name translates as 'human puppet' and uses many different types of masks.

- Barong Ket: A purification dance featuring a mythical creature who protects the village and drives away evil spirits. This performance genre has many variations. The performances use a huge mask and body costume worn by two dancers who perform movements that are similar in some ways to the Chinese lion dance.

## Secular

- Legong: Performed by three young female dancers and derived from Sanghyang. Often performed for temple festivals in the outer temple courtyard.
- Arja: This is sometimes described as opera or sung dance-drama. This popular form has various versions and it is performed by males and females. The stories usually concern romance and are sung in a special verse form, *tembang macapat*.
- Kebyar: Dating from the 1920s, this dance has a strong choral base. Pairs of males and females perform it. In the past, political messages were carried through performances. There are connections to Sanghyang choral singing. An offshoot of this form, Oleg Tumulilingan, a courting dance between two bees, has become especially popular in recent years.
- Parwa: A genre developed in the late nineteenth century, derived in part from a mixture of influences including Gambuh and Wayang Kulit. The source material is the Mahabharata and the performers mix spoken and sung text.
- Prembon: The genre is sometimes performed as part of Odalan ceremonies as well as for completely secular events. Dating from the 1940s, it mixes many different characters from diverse roots, including from Topeng, Arja and Gambuh.
- Janger: Dating from the early part of the twentieth century, this form has elements suggesting Western influence in scenic and costumes designs and some gestures. It also borrows from Baris, Kebyar and Legong.
- Topeng Panca: This masked genre from the nineteenth century is an offshoot from Topeng Pajegan in a fully secularised form.

Unlike the one-man Pajegan form, Topeng Panca uses five performers and emphasises the comic elements. There are additional character masks that are not used in the one-man version.

Cakapung: This performance genre is based around a male choral group and often includes humorous improvised dance movements relating to other forms such as Gambuh, Kebyar and Topeng. It is found in the Karangasem region. The origins are unclear but some think they go back as far as the seventeenth century. It is a form that has no connection to ceremonies or religious events and is sometimes described as a 'social performance'.

Joged: This is perhaps the best-known social performance genre and has many offshoots and variations. The main type is Joged Bumbung and dates from the late nineteenth century. This genre is often found at weddings and other social gatherings. Female dancers demonstrate a flirtatious performance and then select male audience members to dance with them. Some movements suggest connection to Legong. There are various offshoots or sub-forms, some more serious in content.

Kecak: Many commentators believe that German artist Walter Spiess choreographed this dance-drama in the 1920s. It is derived mainly from the male choral work present in Sanghyang. Others, however, believe the origins were all local as the Ramayana story merged with Sanghyang traditions at an earlier point in Balinese history. It is a favourite with tourists today and is a spectacular performance, featuring a large circle of male chorus members with the Ramayana dance in the centre as the chorus move their arms and bodies as they sit on the ground and sing complex interlocking chants in syncopated rhythms.

### **Other classifications**

Calonarang: This is the best-known performance that features the battles between Barong and Rangda, the evil witch. The performance sometimes involves trance, according to the circumstances of performance. More commonly, in the tourist versions it is a secular performance without trance. However, in the pure exorcistic form it is classified as a holy dance depicting the eternal fight

between good and evil. When trance does occur it can sometimes affect onlookers as well as the performer of Rangda. Followers of Rangda attack the witch with *kris* (daggers).

In addition to Calonarang, a number of other dances/rituals/masks are connected to exorcism, trance and magic and possession. Wayang Calonarang is an example of a variation on the usual Wayang as during these performances the *dalang* (master puppeteer) specifically challenges black magic practitioners to engage in battle with him. Onying, as another example, involves villagers attempting, but failing, to stab themselves with a *kris* whilst in a state of heightened trance and possession. Other such rituals with similar aims and also use masks and trance. In addition, a number of recent, emerging forms exist that are too numerous to list for the purpose of this book. Most are, again, offshoots or branches from genres already described above. The major new form is Sendratari, based around an adaptation of some gesture from Kebyar and influenced by the new form of the same name developed in Java in the early 1960s. Sendratari involves, essentially, storytelling in a style closer than most Balinese forms to Western ideas of narrative, in spite of the decorative, traditional elements surrounding it.

This is the background to the chapters that follow. Each chapter takes an in-depth look at each of four key genres or forms of performance and explores them in relation to social and religious context, performance function, technique and training. In addition, they are looked at in parallel to Western concepts of performance and training. The first three are the main arteries, or roots, of tradition: Wayang, Sanghyang and Gambuh. The fourth, Topeng, is the prime example of the masked-performance tradition and the virtuoso performer at work.

## 2 Wayang shadow theatre

The shadow-puppet theatre, Wayang Kulit, is the oldest documented theatrical form in Bali. It still survives, performed for both ritual and entertainment purposes, despite the recent overwhelming influx of technologically based entertainment and the seemingly endless flow of tourists visiting the island. Wayang, or Wayang Kulit, are carved, flat, leather puppets with highly stylistic shapes and colours. The puppets represent animals, demonic beings, mythical figures, human beings of all social strata, heavenly beings and scenic props or figures. In a Wayang Kulit performance, a *dalang* puppet master silhouettes these flat, cut-out figures against a translucent, white screen with an oil lamp as a single source of light. While Wayang theatre has a fixed structure and dramatic characters, its performance invariably involves the creativity and improvisation of the *dalang*. He (although the *dalang* can be male or female, for ease of convention the *dalang* is referred to as 'he' throughout this book) is the creator and central focus of the Wayang performance, because he unites the role of dramatist and performer. The *dalang* has been responsible for passing down culture and tradition from one generation to another. He is also an interpreter of philosophy and religion and an accomplished actor responsible for the detailed vocal characterisation of each puppet. In addition, he demonstrates complex musical skills in his interaction with the live gamelan orchestra that always accompanies a performance. He frequently drums with one foot, against a wooden box, as percussive punctuation to the performance and as a system for cueing the orchestra. So, he is simultaneously solo performer, adaptor, director, puppeteer, musician and musical director. Sometimes, when a performance has a ritual purpose in certain temple ceremonies, he also functions as priest.

Broadly speaking, Asian theatre forms are presented in the West as strictly codified. Many tend to believe that stylisation equals repetitive reproduction in performance of a series of gestures and musical sequences learned by rote; the subjects of creativity and improvisation in this art are unfortunately



Figure 2.1 Behind the Wayang Kulit screen

overlooked. Wayang Kulit is a good case study of how a performer blends detailed personal interpretation within a complex structure of rules and traditions. This creative element is known as *kawi dalang*, which means the creativity (*kawi*) of the puppet master (*dalang*). The *kawi dalang* is not only crucial in perpetuating the genre, but it also allows each production to be distinct and unique, even though the *dalang* may perform the same story over and over again. *Kawi dalang* demands that each performance changes in accordance with the fluctuating place–time–circumstances, *desa–kala–patra*, so in fact every performance is in some ways unique. Thus, *kawi dalang* is a term in the Balinese traditional theatre that solely deals with the *dalang*'s creativity and improvisation in his performance. *Kawi* refers to two different things: an action of aesthetic creation and the name of a language. With reference to the action of aesthetic creation, it means creation, improvisation, invention, or modification. One who composes a play is called *pangawi*, meaning creator or composer or poet. This term is composed of the prefix *pa*, a tool or an agent, added to the root word *kawi*, creation. *Kawi* also refers to the old Javanese-based language that court poets (*pangawi*) traditionally used and developed. They translated and transformed the Sanskrit source version of the Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata into the new Javanese version known as *kakawin*, which is the plural form of *Kawi*. This is all important as it indicates another layer of complexity in the world of a *dalang* – he has to juggle linguistic problems as he decides



when to use Sanskrit (the source language of the two key epic stories, Mahabharata and the Ramayana, on which all performances are based) and when to use Kawi or the vernacular. Neither Sanskrit nor the Kawi language are much understood by the majority of audiences, so most of the language is spoken in the vernacular with some sections of Kawi interlaced. Kawi, for example, is much further removed from everyday speech in Bali than Shakespearian English is for a contemporary audience in England or the USA. In the context of *kawi dalang*, however, Kawi is not primarily used as the name of a language, but rather refers to the created arts and improvisations of a *dalang*. According to the ancient sacred treatise, *Darma Pawayangan*, the *dalang* is entitled to say anything that can be said (Hooykaas, 1973: 18–19), including making a new interpretation of any established name or term. In effect, this means that he is free to change and adapt the stories as he wishes and in Bali one may see radically different presentations of the same source material.

Historians suggest that the performance of Wayang theatre represents the peak of development of shamanism. Expanding the traditional role of the shaman, the *dalang* serves as an artist and a priest to create a Wayang performance and bless holy water. Employing a white screen and an oil lamp to cast the shadows of the Wayang puppets from inside a booth, the *dalang* performs his various roles to the accompaniment of gamelan music.



Figure 2.2 A *dalang* manipulating Wayang puppets



Figure 2.3 I Nyoman Sedana (joint author) performing Wayang Lemah

Based on the two Indian epics or other domestic narrative repertoires, the dramatic characters are presented by about 125 carved flat leather puppets with highly stylistic form and colour. These figures were and are created through a wide range of spiritual experiences or meditations. Since, to the Balinese mind, spiritual experience is holistic and the ultimate experience a human being can have, its expression and explanation can only be visualised through symbols. Symbols developed worldwide in every stage of human history and various forms of cultural arts record their formulations; the oldest known Balinese theatre that elucidates and records those symbols is Wayang. In addition to what the casual outside observer might see in the form of narration, character and plot, there is a highly complex exhibition of symbols at work, linking the performance, for both the Balinese spectators and the performers, to a spiritual context.

The performance may be completely sacred, without needing human audiences, as seen in the daytime performance of the Wayang Lemah, or entirely secular, as seen in several tourist performances. However, the majority are ceremonial, which are held for numerous religious and ritual celebrations such as temple anniversaries, rites of passage and numerous holidays. Coming to a performance of Wayang, the audience is not required to pay an admission fee, but is expected (apart from within a tourist

context) to wear the traditional Balinese temple dress. Several kinds of local entertainments and enterprises, such as gambling events and food stalls, temporarily spring up outside a temple and around the performance site to cater for the taste of upwards of 300 or 400 people; most performances are social gatherings on a large scale. While a performance is in progress, the audience may smoke, drink, eat, chat, in addition to responding or reacting to the performance itself; a few children may be playing around the edges of the performance area or even sleeping until their favourite comic and fighting scenes commence; dogs may be barking and fighting for discarded food in the near vicinity. However, in spite of such distractions, at most performances the *dalang* is trained to concentrate totally on the performance and uses many theatrical devices to control audience concentration. This ability to concentrate intensely in the midst of apparent noise and chaos is a strong characteristic of Balinese performers in various forms. Often during special temple festivals, simultaneous or overlapping performances of dance, masked dance and shadow puppets occur in the same temple area. Orchestras play different music at the same time and seem to have no problems concentrating. Villagers watch one particular performance or change to another at will. It is also extraordinary to the Western observer that small children exhibit an intense ability to concentrate as members of an audience at a performance that lasts many hours. It is interesting that the audience experience is entirely different when watching the two types of shadow-puppet performance. During the daytime performance, the audience gives little attention to the narrative and technique as the performance is intended to increase the sense of ritual as a means of assisting devotion. However, the night-time performances, although often related to temple events, are designed to provoke a noisy and active audience response as the narrative, humour and extravagant demonstration of technique hopes to receive a lively response. In contrast, tourists find night-time shadow performances difficult to enjoy, largely because of the length and problems of language. The topical humour is lost and the techniques are not understood or well recognised.

Unlike in most Western traditions of performance, the events in a temple ceremony/festival are for the primary benefit of the gods and not humans. Humans are welcome to enjoy the performance, but their presence is incidental. This is essential in considering why such an ancient form of performance has such durability. Numerous performance forms are dying out and completely disappearing at a phenomenal rate across Asia, especially since the advent of the electronic age. European soccer matches are broadcast to small towns and villages in the region and American movies are standard viewing. Local television soap operas, video games and pop videos combine in an assault against traditional performance forms. The economics

of modern-day existence in the region conflict with long training periods for performance, often of many years duration; the need to earn a living forces people to migrate to cities and abandon family and/or village performance heritage. In Bali, however, a longevity to performance forms exists that defies much of this regional trend; this is largely because of the almost complete entwining of performance with religious devotion and ceremony. Wayang is a prime example of a form that, in its very essence as an archaic, moving picture projection, should have logically been long eclipsed by electronic media. However, it is still current and popular when performed at ceremonies, private and public, within and outside the temple, continually throughout Bali. It is mandatory for certain events and often chosen when optional at others. In fact, unlike some Balinese forms of performance, such as Legong, Wayang has not largely been perpetuated by tourist performances. On the whole, it is a form that appeals almost exclusively to the Balinese communities within their village environment. It is the ceremonial and religious function that drives the continuance of the form.

Despite a never-ending debate about the origin of the Balinese Wayang, whether Wayang was imported from China or from India, most scholars believe that Wayang theatre was first created in Indonesia (primarily in Java and Bali) by the indigenous shamans or artists. The epics of the Ramayana and Mahabharata were later used to enrich the Wayang narrative repertoires after they were imported from India for other purposes in the fourth century AD. Compared to the work of historians, myths about the origin of Wayang are more prevalent and important. Recorded in the sacred treatise *Purwagama*, the key myth serves as the philosophical foundation of performing Wayang, for it shows Wayang's role as an exorcistic force; it is performed for the purpose of purification ceremonies.

The surviving main myth can be summarised as follows: Once upon a time, the god Siwa was lonely, having cursed his wife, the goddess Parwati, and forced her to live as the demoness Durga in the Setra Gandamayū cemetery. Overpowered by sexual longing for Parwati, Siwa transformed himself into the frightening demon Kala Ludraka, and his sexual union with Durga resulted in numerous demonic beings that instigated a widespread pestilence throughout the world. To restore the security and harmony of the world, the triple gods (Sanghyang Tri Semaya) Brahma, Wisnu and Iswara transformed themselves into three priests and created Wayang puppet theatre. Brahma became the priest Tapowangkeng and served as the *dalang's* right-hand assistant; Wisnu became the priest Salukat and served as the *dalang's* left-hand assistant; and Iswara became the priest Lotatia and served as the *dalang* himself to perform the first-invented Wayang Kulit shadow-puppet theatre. The guardian gods of the four directions (Sanghyang Catur Loka Phala), that is the gods Indra, Kuwera, Yama and Baruna,

became the musicians who played the four instruments of the Gender Wayang orchestra.

The performance Lotatia enacted showed Siwa and Parwati, forgetting their divine origin, becoming the demonic Kala Ludraka and Durga, and giving birth to deadly pestilence throughout the world. However, by being entertained by Lotatia's performance, these demons were all reminded of their divine origin. Calmed, Kala Ludraka returned to Siwa, and Durga to the goddess Parwati. As their demonic spirits were pacified, pestilence vanishes, and human welfare was restored (Ramseyer, 1986: 200).

The significance of this mythology arises from its explicit proposition concerning the context, objective and the number of the performers. Based on this mythological foundation, a *dalang* is responsible for purifying, edifying and enlightening an audience through his verbal and comic creativities and improvisation. Maintaining this original function helps to keep Wayang theatre distinct from other performing-arts genres.

In this myth, seven artists are involved in the performance: one *dalang*, two assistants and four musicians. This is still the normal size of a troupe of Wayang Kulit Parwa in south Bali, from the Jembrana regency in the west to the Karangasem regency in the east. A number of other myths exist, but they all deal with the same central notion that performance has the power to pacify demons and return the divine to its beneficent form. In other words, a specific purpose of purification is inherent in Wayang Kulit and in some other sacred performance forms. The Balinese believe that a dangerous lower spirit can be transformed into a favourable divine spirit through the performance of Wayang. Holy water, which the *dalang* creates at the end of the performance, is a sign of the washing away of the evil – a tangible sign of the desired inner process which the characters in each of the stories achieve release them from domination by lower instincts.

In fact, exorcisms are still common in Bali in many situations, as belief in evil spirits and purification is widespread. In Hindu Panca-Sradha belief, the universe is seen as occupied by all kinds of spirits, from extremely good to evil. These spirits affect the lives of human beings and prompt them to do good or ill. As Freudian psychology sees the unconscious split into three parts – super ego, ego and id – similarly Balinese spirits are divided into three functions (Triguna): Satwam (essentially, heart-based truth), Rajah (thought-based motive) and Tamah (emotion-based decision). Both Western psychology and Balinese conceptions of the spirit world see the human being as vulnerable to numerous unconscious motives. In order to win favour from spirits, humans need to appease them by offering the best treatment possible. For the Balinese, art is the best product of a human being and thus becomes the ideal antidote to evil. The philosophical purpose of Wayang, by using music, song, dance and narrative, is to exorcise

the demonic, showing us first what it looks like and then returning it into its divine form. Unlike most of the West where God is dead, Bali is an island where spirits of good and evil are very much alive and performances are frequently interrelated with them in one way or another.

Many different forms of Wayang are in Bali today, such as Wayang Ramayana, Wayang Wong (a dance-drama genre in which the dancers speak and emulate puppets), Wayang Gambuh (based mainly on the Panji cycle of stories), Wayang Kulit Calonarang (focused on witchcraft and black magic), Wayang Cupak and Wayang Kulit Sasak (based on Muslim stories) and some new and experimental versions. These relatively new artistic explorations and experimentations (mainly explored at ISI Denpasar Institute rather than in villages), involve a wide range of puppet shapes and sizes (ranging from less than 0.3 metres to 2 metres tall), many different lighting devices, from traditional simple torches through to modern, elaborate lighting equipment that produces special effects. Scenic backgrounds and settings are variously featured through lighting, pictures and moving backgrounds like a diorama. Video projection is also being explored as technology increases in availability and decreases in cost. In place of the traditional leather Wayang puppets, the performance may use plastic versions of these puppets with new designs and characters, newly created rod puppets and human actors and actresses. Although the themes and contents generally remain traditional, the forms have been carefully and extensively developed. In Wayang, as in so much of Balinese culture, little tension exists between those who wish to preserve and those who innovate. In fact, often the younger custodians of tradition are those who also innovate according to the appropriateness of the performance time, place and circumstance.

The dominant type of performance throughout Bali, though, is Wayang Parwa. Its performance is frequently held on many ritual and religious occasions, both as entertainment and as a rite of passage. Broadly speaking, this Wayang theatre consists of the sacred Wayang Lemah (day puppet, without a screen) and the ceremonial Wayang Peteng (night puppet, with the screen and oil lamp). All the stories are derived from the Indian epic Mahabharata, including numerous related folk tales from which a *dalang* frequently modifies and occasionally creates branch stories. Wayang Parwa is the oldest standard puppetry in all aesthetics aspects of Wayang theatre in Bali. Hence, *dalang* students in several training centres, especially in the two government-sponsored schools (SMKI and STSI), are required to begin to learn this type of performance before moving on to other types of Wayang. Lasting one hour for the sacred Wayang Lemah and about two to four hours for the ceremonial Wayang Peteng, the performance involves one *dalang* puppeteer, two assistants and four musicians. The musical accompaniment

is the quartet metallophone (similar to, but taller than, the Western xylophone) Gender Wayang music ensemble, although sometime it is reduced into one pair (two instruments) in north Bali.

Before looking at a typical performance of this genre, understanding what has happened in advance of the event itself is important when examining Balinese performance – as much as the performance of a given Shakespeare play will have been determined at the point of design and conceptual decisions. The complex social, and sometimes religious, contextual situation affects, in an intricate way, how the performance will be structured and delivered. This applies not just to Wayang Kulit, the genre mainly under scrutiny here, but for most performance situations in Bali. Even before a specific performance is contemplated, the *dalang* has created the puppets and thereby made decisions about style.

In Bali, the audience is the active subject that invites the artists and also sponsors the performance. In contrast, in the West the audience is a comparatively passive entity that gains the right to watch a theatrical production by paying for admission. The patrons in Bali initiate and arrange the schedule, as well as select the artists. They provide the transportation, arrange for the food served at the event, set the performing venue and provide the fee for the performers, an amount almost never fully established in advance, which they pay immediately after the show. Balinese artists are correspondingly more economically passive than the entrepreneurial Western artists. All artists are trained in certain specialised repertoires and performance genres, and focus on perfecting and producing their own artistry without any effort to advertise or promote the performance. Artists await the invitation and leave all issues concerning box office and marketing to the patron.

An individual or a group of people with the intention to commission a performance would, typically, first come to an artist's house and agree with the artist on the performing arts genre to be performed. The theatre genres often commissioned include: Gambuh dance-drama with seven-toned Pelog music, Wayang Wong theatre with Slendro Batel music, Parwa dance-drama also with Slendro Batel music, Calonarang dance-drama with Gong Kebyar music, Topeng masked theatre also with Gong Kebyar music, Arja opera with Geguntangan music, Prembon with Gong Kebyar music and Wayang Kulit with its Gender Wayang music. The genres are distinguished from each other more by the form (style of dance/movement and acting, speech and diction, song repertoires, costumes, stage property and musical accompaniment) rather than by the content (story or play), although each genre implies its related repertoire of stories and the dramatic characters associated with that repertoire. At the time of commissioning a performance, however, the sponsor is concerned with the genre and not with the specific play to be



performed or characters to be presented. Once an artist is hired and agrees to perform a given genre, the artist prepares the performing devices, puppets, masks, costumes, musical instruments, etc. belonging to the genre. When the sponsor wants Topeng, the artist is ready with masks; when the sponsor selects Wayang Kulit, the artist brings the puppets.

After the genre is set, the artist considers the story. Many conventions regulate the aesthetic concepts and treatment of story for each genre. The way the story will develop is regulated by the rules of the genre, but the specific plot or presentation will be moulded by the artist's understanding of the repertoire from having viewed other performances of that play or from the artist's own interpretation of the episode. The dramatic characters are the last features the artist considers. Although each genre has in itself an implied number of stock characters (king, prime minister, sages, prince, princess, servants, etc.), the specific identity or profile of each character can only be established after the story is selected. The story determines which kingdom is involved and who, in turn, is the king. For example, if the story selected is a Mahabharata episode in the kingdom of Amarta, Yudistira, the eldest of the five Pandava brothers will be the king. Thus, the artist typically thinks first of the genre, then moves to the story and finally thinks of the particular characters included in the dramatic action.

It is this triangle of genre, story and character that sits at the centre of the *dalang*'s creative process in any performance situation. By manipulating and juggling these elements, the *dalang* moulds a particular performance once the commissioning process is complete and agreed upon with the sponsor. It is in some ways parallel to the work of the modern theatre director in the West who is asked by a specific theatre company to direct a Shakespearian work, for example. The play is chosen, the financial parameters established, the cast selected and then the script/concept/design work generally follows. In much of the Western tradition, it is the text/script that is the scaffolding or skeleton upon which the performance is built in the same way that in Balinese tradition it is the genre. Shakespeare himself has adapted the source materials and the director will further adapt and refine; whereas in Bali, the *dalang* takes on this role, but within a tightly structured, traditional framework. Interestingly, the major focus in both cases is on the behaviour of kings, princes and politicians; the major themes are often about justice, power, love, honour, kingship, justice, betrayal and trust. Both projects come with a fairly fixed set of characters and both have a central narrative sequence. In both cases, one can make changes to story and characters but in both traditions they are mainly left intact. The key difference is that in the Shakespeare project the text, that may seem rigid and inflexible to the outsider, is considered by most directors and actors to be the strength and heart of the work that will follow; whereas in

the Balinese performance, the genre, complete with rules and also rigid structures, is similarly at the heart of the work. It is sometimes easier for a foreign theatre director, often working in translation, to be more radical and free with a Shakespearean text than a native English speaker conversant with text/verse conventions. The same is true for foreign directors or performers who borrow from and adapt shadow-puppetry technique from Bali. With Shakespeare, the native-speaking director is more likely to freely adapt/change the period setting or style of acting/presentation rather than depart largely from the text itself. In other words, knowledge of the form demands more adherence to the subtleties implied in that structure. Similarly, the Balinese *dalang* is likely to be more innovative within the story rather than within the overall conventions of structure. In either example, the uninitiated outsider will only see the external effect/impact and not be aware of the creative tensions between innovation and creative expression on one side and tradition and structure on the other.

The interplay between the three elements of genre, story and character is typical of the tripartite patterns of balance at work in many aspects of Balinese culture and thought (as mentioned in Chapter 1, pages 8–10). The balancing concept of God, human and environment within every house and village is called *Tri Hita Karana*; the trinitarian god Brahma (creator), Wisnu (preserver), and Siwa (destroyer) is called *Tri Murti* and the three balancing aspects of human energy, speech and thought are known as *Tri Premana*. The creative interplay between the three key dramatic elements can be easily described diagrammatically as shown in Figure 2.4.

Genre occupies the bottom of the triangle serving as the foundation or base, which accommodates the story and the characters. Among the three components, genre is the most identifiable feature, establishing an autonomic form. While the same story and characters may appear in a few different genres, the form will be clear from the genre. Almost the entire structure of the genre, music, style of costume, customary way of improvising a performance, etc., may be seen in one single holistic presentation, but only the selected parts of the story and characters will appear in that performance because the genre has very limited space to accommodate dramatic scenes. For example, in the *Wayang* genre, the *dalang* typically selects only one sad scene, one love scene and one climax for each performance, although the narrative from which he draws has many more scenes of each type.

The story and characters slope up from the foundation to form a perfect triangle. These two slanting positions are appropriate, because story and characters are relatively less stable/crucial than genre. *Dalang* artists do not often reveal the story and characters they are going to perform until the show begins. Sometimes the artist does this to surprise the audience with a

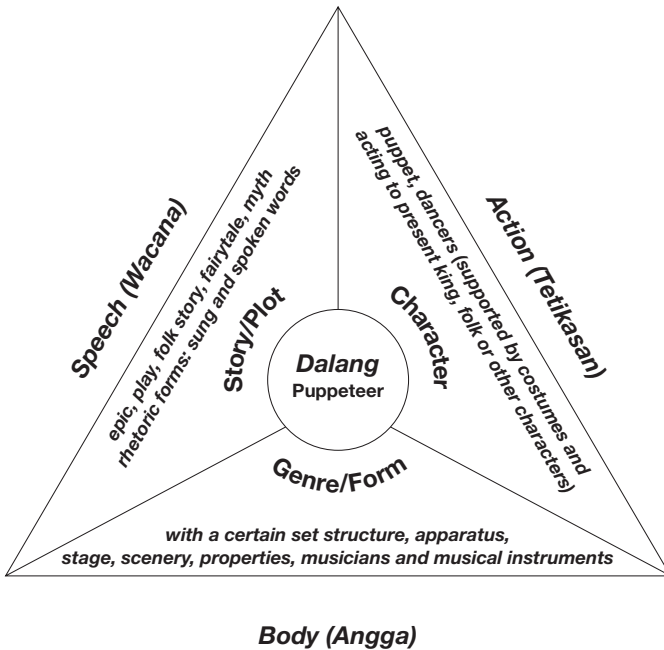


Figure 2.4 Wayang Kulit

new story. At other times he may want to access rumours and gossip among the performance patrons before making a choice of the story to perform. Even when a story has been pre-selected by the artist in accordance with the type of a ceremony, local circumstances may prompt the *dalang* to suddenly change the story to a more appropriate version. He constructs a play in one of three ways:

- 1 by excerpting the plot from the main line of the potential story as given in Kawi literature (*kakawin*);
- 2 by reconstructing a play from an existing Wayang play he has seen (*pakem*);
- 3 by creating new stories (*lakon carangan*) based on minor incidents in the main body of the epic.

No matter how the *dalang* generates the story, the bottom line is always to activate the harmony between genre, story and character. Modifications to the story and the characters are adjusted to comply with the necessary form of the genre, until all parts of genre–story–character are harmoniously balanced.

The three organic components are always interactive and never independent of one another in bringing about harmony. Since a *dalang* must be able to present something new or fresh in every show, he always needs to modify one or more elements. Within each form of Wayang are clear parameters within which the creativity takes place. These are identified in

Table 2.1 Wayang Kulit

<i>If the genre/form is:</i>	<i>The story is taken from:</i>	<i>The characters must be:</i>
Wayang Kulit Parwa With quartet Gender music	Any part of Mahabharata	Yudistira, Bima, Arjuna, Nakula, Sahadewa, Duryodana, Sakuni, Bisma, Drona, Karna, Salya, etc.
Wayang Kulit Ramayana With Slendro Batel music	Any part of Ramayana	Rama, Sita, Laksmana, Rahvana, Marica, Surpanaka, Kumbakarna, Trijata, Hanoman, Subali, Sugriva, Anggada, etc.
Wayang Kulit Gambuh With Pagambuhan music	Any part of Malat/Panji cycles	Reden Panji Inu Kertapati, Candrakirana, Trate Bang, Lasem, Bajak Taruarsa, Kabo Tan Mundur, Kebo Anggun-angun, Togog, etc.
Wayang Kulit Cupak With Slendro Batel music	Any part of Cupak (Balinese folk story)	Pan Bekung, Men Bekung, Cupak, Grantang, Raksasa Benaru, Prabu Kediri, Diah Citrawati, Nang Klimun, Nang Klenceng, etc.
Wayang Kulit Arja With Geguntangan music	Any part of Malat/Panji cycles	Condong, Galuh, Desak/Made Rai, Limbur, Liku, Punta, Wijil, Mantri Manis, Mantri Buduh, etc.
Wayang Kulit Tantri With Semar Pagulingan music	Any part of Tantri (animal story from the Indian <i>Panca Tantra</i> )	Ni Diah Tantri, Prabu Iswarya Dala, Patih Bande Swarya, Macan, Singa, Sembada, Penyuu, Yuyu, Angsa, Pedanda Baka, and other animals
Wayang Kulit Babad With Semar Pagulingan music	Any part of Babad chronicle	Dalem/Raja, Patih/Gusti Agung, Gusti Ngurah, Panasar Kelihan and Cenikan, Dalem Arsa Wijaya, Pasek, Bendesa, Bondres, etc.

Table 2.1 continued

<i>If the genre/form is:</i>	<i>The story is taken from:</i>	<i>The characters must be:</i>
Wayang Kulit Calonarang With Gong Kebyar music	Any version of Calonarang	Liyak, Rangda, Balian, Celuluk, Bojog, Matah Gde, Galuh, Klika, Sisya, Prabu, Patih Taskara Maguna, Bondres, etc.

This pattern of balance between the three elements – genre, story, character – is similar in most forms of performance in Balinese tradition, but especially acute in Wayang. This balance is a starting point for understanding what is in the mind of the *dalang* in preparation for and, in many ways, during a performance. In order to comprehend the extent of detail involved in this artistic juggling act, a fuller explanation of what the *dalang* understands about each element is useful.

By genre or form the aspects involved in the performance are the general apparatus (stage, scenery and properties), the artists, the performance structure and the musical accompaniment. Typically, a partly open pavilion or a hall is temporarily transformed into a booth about three metres wide by four metres long. A Wayang performance always needs this simple booth to hold the white screen on which the shadow puppets are projected by the oil lamp (*blencong*). The screen becomes the sole stage for a Wayang show. The *dalang* defines the performance area on the screen by placing the largest puppet Butha Siu or Wisnumurti at the right edge of the screen and Butha Sia or Ludramurti at the left edge. The brightness of the lighting is occasionally dimmed by *klopekkan gadebong* ‘a piece of banana log’ in order to create a special effect for dramatic scenes, or to alter the mood or emotion of the scene. Typically the *dalang*’s two assistants, *katengkong*, work closely with the *dalang*. In order to expedite his specific theatrical techniques, a *dalang* may prefer to keep his own assistants rather than musicians. In other words, to perform with musicians with whom he is not familiar is better than to perform with new assistants. Most Wayang types – Wayang Ramayana, Gambuh, Cupak, Arja, Calonarang and Babad – employ about a dozen musicians. However, Wayang Parwa requires only four musicians. In the northern part of Bali, only two musicians are required.

To obtain a better understanding of the genre, identifying and defining the nature and scope of the performance structure of the Wayang Kulit Parwa is useful, since it is the most popular type of Wayang in Bali. The *dalang* sees this as the essential structure within which he operates. There

are, in effect, 18 chronological activities. Although it is possible to omit a sequence or event, it is not possible to have, for example, extra love scenes or fighting scenes. Also, it is sometimes possible to reorder sequences for specific dramaturgical purposes. As with the earlier Shakespeare parallel, this following structural scaffolding is as important as the Western classical text itself:

- 1 Ritual offering and invocation. After all hospitality (food and social welcoming and greeting) and the apparatus are set up, the *dalang* begins to dedicate the opening offering (Peras Santun Pamungkah) to invoke divine guidance. A *dalang* also serves the *segehan* offering to the lower spirit in order to obtain spiritual support. The end of the dedication of the offering cues the musicians to begin their overture.
- 2 Musical overture/prelude, Gending Pategak. This piece technically tells the spectators that the Wayang Kulit performance is about to begin, while the musicians are ‘warming up’ with their instrumental music. Among numerous popular musical pieces, musicians often play *Sekar Gendot*, *Sekar Sungsang*, *Merak Angelo*, *Cangak Merengang*, *Katak Ngongkek* and *Sulendro*.
- 3 Opening of the puppet storage and performance box, Pamungkah, with some silent incantations by the *dalang*. After the *dalang* taps the box three times with his palm, musicians begin to play the Gending Pamungkah. Eventually the *dalang* leads the tempo of the music by knocking his wooden hammer (*cepala*) on the right side of the puppet box.
- 4 The Tree of Life, Kayonan, puppet dance. It symbolises the first creation of the universe through the evolution of five universal elements (the *panca maha butha*) of life: earth, water, fire, wind and ether. Regardless of the selected story and context of the performance, the Kayonan puppet always begins and ends the show, in addition to making appearances in between the acts (Babak or Babad). The Kayonan puppet dance is accompanied by a musical piece called *Taru Mentik*, blooming tree.
- 5 Casting, with the selection of story and preliminary arrangement of puppets. While the musicians display their skill by playing a number of pieces that they may choose, known as Oncang-Oncangan, the *dalang* independently recasts and prepares the puppets. For example, the same puppet previously used to represent the god Wisnu might be recast as Kresna. The next time it is used it may represent Rama, and so forth.
- 6 The second Tree of Life dance, to begin the first act. The dance is accompanied by a musical piece called *Taru Keampehan*, blown-out tree.

- 7 The entering scene with sung poetry, Alas Harum, Fragrance Forest, a music piece for soft characters, Candi Rebah, Slanted Tiara, a piece for demonic characters and the Bopong piece for strong/hard characters. All lyrics are in the Kawi language, which the audience only partly understands. Feeling the mood and atmosphere is more important for the spectators than fully understanding the meaning of the words. In this scene, the *dalang* begins to sing with a medium pitch, tempo, and power of his voice. This is the only opportunity for the *dalang* to warm up his voice.
- 8 Incantation and prologue, Panyacah. Narrating the early evolution and the creation of the universe, which resulted in the settlement of all the planets and life on earth, a *dalang* puppeteer must explore all possibilities of his voice, from the very soft through to the extremely loud, from the very low to the extremely high. The narration is in Kawi and is musically and spiritually enjoyed by the Wayang Kulit enthusiasts, often without an understanding of the text. The dramatic structure or story begins during the last quarter of this prologue, when the *dalang* recites: 'Now it shall be told the appearance or the coming of . . .?'
- 9 The first court meeting scene, Patangkalan: (a) King interlude, Pangalang Ratu, (b) Servant interlude, Pangalang Parekan. Either one of the older servants, Twalen or Delem, but never Sangut or Wredah, entertains or praises his lord by singing a hymn or reciting a stanza of a *kakawin*. This hymn is called *Tampak Silir*, stepping on the same lane together, since the melody and the pitch of the vocal and instrumental should go simultaneously and exactly in the same step and tempo. In this meeting scene, the *dalang* uses at least three languages: the Kawi, Sanskrit and Balinese (low, medium and high). Sometimes he may even use the Indonesian languages and foreign words.
- 10 Travelling scene, Angkat-angkatan, accompanied by a number of ostinatic pieces. The *dalang* recites an elaborate song over short pieces of repeatable instrumental music (ostinato). Among the many pieces are Gedebeg, Srikandi, Bimakroda, Krepetan, etc.
- 11 Love/flirtation scene, Rebong. To many contemporary *dalang* who are not well trained in puppet-manipulation skills, this scene is optional or substituted with the Ragragan comic interlude, although the Rebong is traditionally a requirement.
- 12 Sad scene, Tetangisan. Depending on the character, the scene has three different versions and each is accompanied by a different musical piece: Gending Mesem for soft characters with small, flat eyes, Runday for demonic characters with sharp fangs and Bendu Semara for strong/hard characters with big, oval or round eyes. Only one version may be performed at a time. Recently, this scene has also become optional.



- 13 The second court scene, Babad, of the opponent or antagonist character, although it may often be in another position in the sequence. Sometimes the meeting scene may be between the protagonist character and the antagonist.
- 14 Ragragan, comic interlude and social contemporary commentary. It appears continually anywhere from the travelling scene through to the end of the fighting scene. One comic court attendant, or possibly a pair, always appears for this commentary; it is an allegorical, often absurd, hilarious dialogue or monologue.
- 15 The dance of Bapang Delem. The boisterous court attendant, Delem, typically begins the second scene, always with his ever-sceptical younger brother Sangut.
- 16 Second travelling scene, Angkat-angkatan. Unlike the first travelling scene, this scene is more than mere travelling; it is, in effect, usually a group of rebels (ogre soldiers or monkey armies) going towards a battle scene.
- 17 Fighting or battle scene, Siat. This scene always signifies the climax of a play or a performance, no matter what story the *dalang* selects. The accompanying musical piece is Batel, which has the sound and tone of a battle.
- 18 Ritual dedication, Panyudamalan. In this sequence, holy water is arranged for the purification ceremony. The beginning of *dalang*'s incantation is a cue for the musicians to begin playing either the piece Panyudamalan or Bugari.

Except for the Ragragan interlude, each of these 18 categories is identified by, and must match with, the exact sequence of musical accompaniment. Musicians are independent from the *dalang*'s cues and dramatic activities only in phases 2, 5 and 18, but even to begin these independent pieces, musicians still wait for the cue from the *dalang*. In the rest of those activities, beyond those three pieces, the musicians must follow the *dalang*'s cues closely so they know whether to remain or to adjust and/or to change the piece, the rhythm or tempo (with an appropriate musical cadences) in accordance with the dramatic sequence and movements. Beginning from phases 3 to 4 and then from the phases 6 to 17, the musical accompaniment should closely follow the puppet movements, reinforce the dramatic mood or fuse with the *dalang*'s vocal arts to compose a musical drama. In Bali, a Wayang show never takes place without musicians. Dalang artists may produce the conventional types of vocal arts, Tetandakan, only with a musical accompaniment.

An ensemble of gamelan music always accompanies the performance of Wayang Kulit theatre. Of the 30 existing divergent ensembles, three

ensembles are traditionally affiliated with and employed to accompany a Wayang show. The quartet or at least a pair (*pangisep* 'male' and *pangumbang* 'female' instruments) of the metallophone Gender Wayang music ensemble invariably accompanies the Mahabharata-based Wayang Parwa. When two medium-sized Kendang drums, a unit of cymbal, knobbed Klenang, Kajar and Kempur gong chimes are added to the quartet Gender music, then the ensemble is called the Batel Ramayana. This Batel music accompanies the performance of Wayang Ramayana, Wayang Calonarang and the Wayang Cupak. When the quartet Gender instruments of the Batel ensemble are replaced with several giant bamboo flutes and several instruments such as the Gumanak and Gentorag bells clusters, the ensemble is called Pagambuhan. This flute-dominated music accompanies the performance of the Wayang Gambuh, which is based on the Panji cycles. Just as the narrative repertoires are associated with different genres of performance, different ensembles are associated with a specific type of Wayang. Consequently, an audience would immediately recognise the specific type of Wayang that is being performed simply by hearing the music. In recent experimental productions, other instruments have been added.

The role of music is crucial in Wayang, because numerous dramatic moods, emotions and movements are properly established only by playing a certain piece with all its cadences, rhythm, melody and tempo. Although there is no room here to exhaustively discuss the important role of music to the Wayang, it is important to understand that certain musical pieces establish a certain dramatic event (such as travel or conflict) or mood (such as sadness or anger) even before any text is spoken.

Discussing how a *dalang* cues and collaborates with musicians is essential to understanding the process of creativity in performance. Except for the Ragragan interlude, each of the 18 chronological activities (*astadasa karma*) of the performance is identified by and must match the exact set of musical accompaniment. The musicians must closely follow the *dalang's* cues whether to remain or to adjust and/or to change the piece, the rhythm, or the tempo (with appropriate musical cadences) in accordance with dramatic sequence and movements. The *dalang* cues and guides the orchestra as a conductor and musical director. Specific triggers for this dynamic relationship express themselves through the following: when the *dalang* raps rhythmically on the puppet box, *tabuh cepala*; when the puppet performs certain movements, or patterns of movement, during the dramatic narrative; when the *dalang* sings his lines; and when the *dalang* performs routine ritualistic actions. A *dalang* is often frustrated and uncomfortable when working with new musicians who do not share the same artistic approach or training as him.

The first sound that the *dalang* uses to cue his musicians, which sets the tempo of the opening piece, is manifested through a tapping sound. The

*dalang* makes this sound by knocking or tapping the cone-shaped, wooden rattle on the puppet box; he holds the rattle in his hand or in the toes of his right foot. This is similar in function to a jazz drummer using a foot pedal. Three basic sounds of *cepala*/box are *tak* (single), *blak* (simultaneous double sounds when the *dalang*'s foot and the *cepala* hit the box), and *tak-blak* (alternately plural sounds when the first *tak* is immediately complemented by the second *blak*). Any composite patterns of the *cepala* are known as *tabuh*, a term which also refers to a compositional piece of Balinese gamelan music.

Although each *dalang* may develop his own distinctive rattle music with different degrees of proficiency and with a wide variation of sophistication, the function of the sound is the same. A *dalang* invariably employs the sound like a sensor to cue musicians to initiate and stop a motif. Similarly to a musical conductor with a Western orchestra, a *dalang* uses the sound to keep the beat and to adjust and control the tempo of the music. Most of the time a *dalang* employs the *cepala* rattle as a musical device to emphasise the cadence of puppet movements. The effect is similar to the percussive punctuations found in Chinese performance traditions, such as Beijing opera.

According to the rhythmical pattern and function of each type, the *tabuh cepala* is distinguished as follows:

- One stroke, *tabuh pisan*, has three divisions: a single *tak*, a single *blak* and a series of *tak . . . tak . . . tak . . . tak . . .*
  - 1 A single *tak* (only the *cepala* hits the box) begins a dialogue, speech or speaking.
  - 2 A single *blak* (both foot and *cepala* simultaneously hitting the box) ends a sequence of action.
  - 3 A series of *tak* begins a sequence of action.
- A syncopated pattern of two, *tabuh dua*, accompanies the dancing of a puppet, or stabbing scene with the *kris* (sword) and the walk of a lame or crippled Wayang puppet character.
- A syncopated pattern of three, *tabuh telu*, ends a speech.
- A syncopated pattern of four, *tabuh pat*, accompanies fighting.
- A syncopated pattern of five, *tabuh lima*, also known as *ngebrag*, accompanies Delem, the clown of the antagonist, as he dances, *Bapang Delem*, and for fighting with Gada (maces).
- A syncopated pattern of seven, *tabuh pitu*, which is the (composite) pattern of three and four, follows the rest of the actions.

The first stroke is not counted, for it serves to warn the musician about the upcoming cue. In every case, the *tabuh* of the *cepala* rattle supports the

action or movement of the puppets. It translates the *dalang*'s conception of character and the demands of the story's action into tangible sound.

The second device that a *dalang* uses to cue his musicians is *tetikasan*, a term which refers to all puppet movements and manipulation. Musicians know that a certain character should have specific music for a certain occasion, such as when entering or running and whenever a character is angry or sad or in love. Some pieces are even named according to the action of a puppet, for which the piece must be played. For example, the piece of *Bapang Delem* must accompany the entrance of the comic servant Delem. The piece *Gending Garuda* must accompany the dance of Garuda the eagle. A good Balinese musician demonstrates personal skill but must also be very attentive to the *dalang*'s cueing. Musicians do not have to be concerned all the time with the various puppet movements, but it is crucial that they be attentive to the transitional moments or actions. Most errors occur when musicians miss or time transitions badly, thereby frustrating the *dalang*. In some ways, the *dalang* is as concerned about the rhythm and impact of transitions in the narrative as a Western theatre director is about rhythm of scene endings and changes. In both cases, the energy and impact of the performance is damaged and the concentration/involvement of the audience is weakened when the performance fails technically in this respect. The Western theatre director spends much of the technical period of a production fine-tuning the required speed and rhythm of these changes, and the *dalang* works with and guides the musicians to the same end. Formalised movement and cadence, known as *ngeseh angsel*, a principal for all characters, is the most crucial among the movement patterns. *Ngeseh* is a jerky, physical cadence of the Wayang puppet, which is a cue that must be promptly responded to by the musicians in order to develop an *angsel*, an abrupt rhythmic pattern of syncopated accents followed by the orchestra, culminating in a sudden pause which suspends the music.

During a battle scene, the movement of a puppet shooting arrows, jabbing his fists, poking weapons and making numerous fighting gestures is comparable to the commanding movement of a baton in the hand of a Western music conductor. A good *dalang* is very aware of how these dramatic and extravagant sequences will excite an audience.

The third way a *dalang* cues his musicians is by loudly reciting dramatic terms. Some of those cueing devices are listed and translated below (Zurbuchen, 1987: 163):

<i>bawisiati</i>	next, then, following upon
<i>ari wawu</i>	just then, next, just as
<i>agelis</i>	immediately, quickly
<i>ari tedun</i>	upon the descent of

<i>ari wijil</i>	upon the appearance/coming forth of
<i>caritanen</i>	let it be told
<i>warnanen</i>	let it be described
<i>byatita</i>	formerly, in the part
<i>saksana</i>	in the wink of an eye
<i>kancit</i>	straightaway

This dramatic narrative is easier for musicians to respond to than the puppet movements and the pattern of the rattle. For example, when a *dalang* wishes to tell his musicians to begin the *mesem* (sad scene for Arjuna), all he needs to do is recite, 'Therefore Prince Arjuna cries', and the musicians respond accordingly.

The fourth device that a *dalang* uses to cue his musicians is by singing a line or phrase. Similar to the technique often practised in Western musical theatre when the actor signals the musical director by saying a particular word or phrase, a *dalang* simply starts by singing a line after which the musicians would promptly follow. For example, when a *dalang* wishes to begin the Rebong love scene, he may sing, 'Fragrant aroma permeates the air . . . (*Miyik ngalub malimpugan . . .*).' Other musical scenes that require a sung phrase to begin them include the Tampak Silir unison vocal and instrumental, Angkat-angkatan travelling scene, Peparikan seductive scene and the Genjekan drunken scene.

In terms of musical drama or narration, a *dalang's* cue for his musicians to collaborate with him is a *sine qua non*. Based on interactivity between a *dalang's* vocal art and instrumental music which complement the narration, the Wayang performance employs three divergent types of musical drama:

- 1 *Tandak* (*tetandakan*, plural) is the vocal art that embellishes the melody and faithfully follows the pitch and tone of the instrumental music. This type of vocal art is always used for entrance scenes, sad scenes and love scenes. For example, *tandak alas harum* is used for the appearance of refined characters. *Tandak candi rebah* is for the arrival of demonic characters. *Tandak mesem* is for a sad scene of refined characters with small eyes; *tandak rundah* is for sad scenes of demonic characters with sharp fangs; and *tandak bendu semara* is for sad scenes of strong/hard characters with big oval or round eyes.
- 2 *Tampak Silir* is vocal/instrumental music where melody, pitch and tone match. In the first meeting scene, *Tampak Silir* is usually sung by the servant or precedes the dialogue, narrating the features of each character who is about to speak. The lyric is usually a brief, flamboyant description about a great king, a resilient hero, a holy sage, a gorgeous palace or a prosperous country.

- 3 *Bebaturan* are ornamental vocal arts, which are melodically free from, and far more elaborate than, the instrumental music. Unlike the *tandak*, in which the instrumental music is dominant, the vocal element in *Bebaturan* always dominates the ostinato of the instrumental pieces. This vocal type is used in the travelling scenes and some fighting scenes. The lyrics describe the situation or the mood of a specific character.

It is worth noting these musical processes as it indicates the detail and complexity of the relationship between the *dalang* and the orchestra that is at the heart of a performance. It is also worth remembering that although all know the structure every performance, the *dalang* is constantly improvising, adding comments and adapting the material so the dynamic of one performance and another, even of the same basic story by the same *dalang*, will be markedly different. These examples also demonstrate the enormous precise and technical detail required by the *dalang*. The local audience will be well aware of how the *dalang* is manipulating the techniques and materials and it will affect their response as the performance unfolds.

Finally, there is a cue that prompts the musicians to play a musical piece that is purely artistic, structural and/or ritualistic, without any association with dramatic characters. An example of this is the musical overture, which always begins a Wayang performance. When a *dalang* dedicates an opening offering, *santun pamungkah*, to God and then serves the *segehan* offering to the lower spirit in order to obtain spiritual support, the action serves as a cue for the musicians – a signal for them to get ready to play the piece. It is also a signal for the audience that the show will now begin and the audience do indeed become more attentive in anticipation of what will follow.

The stories used in Wayang come from various sources, and the Wayang genre indicates the name of the source. Wayang Ramayana clearly indicates the narrative source as does Wayang Parwa (Mahabharata), etc. These two major sources are known in translation, in the Javanese poetry *kakawin*, and are in many ways an adaptation, rather than the original Sanskrit. Various other sources exist also, some in verse, some in prose and some in a combination of the two. The other source stories originally come from India, Indonesia or are indigenous to Bali.

Once the story has been chosen and the ideas formulated for how the *dalang* will approach its telling, the next task is to select specific puppets. Sometimes various puppets represent the same character according to the situation or mood. These variations are known as *wanda* and determine in many ways the style/tone of the storytelling. Sometimes the differences are simple, such as before and after ascending the throne for a prince: one with a kingly headdress and one with a simpler version. The most interesting

example is with the character Gatutkaca, the son of the Pandawa hero, Bima; he has five *wanda* (the most of any character) that show specific aspects of his history. First, he is a baby puppet, Jabang Tatuka. Second, he appears encrusted with dirt, steel and iron for an episode where he is literally forged into a superhuman to challenge the monster Naga Pracono. Third, a puppet represents him in his customary form as a handsome prince. Fourth, he is a huge cloud-monster for the scene where he challenges Karna, the commander-in-chief of the Korawa army in a battle. Finally, he is featured as an abject creature when his armour is peeled away from his body. In recent years, the use of *wanda* in the performance has increased in the way that new puppets are constructed to represent different stages of a character, motivated by the search for more flexibility in puppet manipulation. New *wanda* are created to provide more complex movements, especially for comic characters and animals.

A *dalang's* puppet collection (its size and range) does not completely limit which stories he can tell, as it is possible to substitute one character for another. The governing principle of this kind of substitution is that the borrowed puppet must suit the general type that is required by the play. A refined knight may represent another refined hero, a refined lady can represent another refined queen and an insignificant demon may represent another lesser-known ogre. A narrow-eyed soldier can represent any member of the army of the protagonists' group used on the right side of the screen and a round-eyed soldier can represent any army's member from the antagonists' group at the left side. The names may be changed, as long as the puppet type is correct. This also allows the *dalang* to create new stories or heavily modify existing stories. As can be seen in the parallel discussion about Topeng, there is more ability to innovate than at first seems possible.

Another task for the *dalang* is constructing his puppets; although some *dalang* commission others to build their puppets, most create them themselves. Constructing and manipulating puppets are especially important parts of a *dalang's* ability to introduce creativity into his presentation today. Traditional puppets are often felt to limit development of a more expressive vocabulary of movements, *tetikasan*. In an outburst of creativity in recent years, *dalang* have created new puppets with expanded potential for movement. Additional joints are added in the neck, upper arms, waist, upper thighs and knees. Manipulatable hindquarters, wings, trunks and ears have been added to animal puppets. In addition to the traditional strings and sticks, added means of controls have been explored by using rubber bands, velcro, cables and even batteries. Characters that lend themselves to the greatest degree of experimentation are demonic and animal characters, as these characters are expected to move more extensively and with more agility than human beings. A fairly recently created genre, Wayang Tantri,



first performed in the early 1980s, is a good example of how this can be used to innovate. It is basically a fairy tale that features a smart girl, Tantri, who tells 1,001 stories within stories about clever animals she works with in order to prevent the king from seducing her. Completely new styles of puppets have been developed for these stories, often influenced by ideas from overseas. Unlike a traditional puppet, where a single stick fuses legs, upper body and head, in these puppets the tip of the main body stick is attached to the puppet's temple and loosely bonded to the foot, freeing the body and head. This allows the *dalang* to manipulate the puppet in several ways; moving its foot up and down affects the body, hip and head; pulling a string attached to the head allows for head movements; pulling the string attached to the foot creates kicks; pulling the string attached to the jaw makes the puppet appear to speak. It may be done section by section or simultaneously depending on the desired effect. Many of the animals' ears, wings, rumps, heads and body parts can move. Other new puppet creations have mushroomed in the last 20 years, helping to feed elements of modernity and energy, especially within new stories or genres. Some *dalang* have created puppets that have also expanded the traditional method of manipulation. These include a puppet riding a bicycle manipulated by batteries, string, cable and rods; a puppet that can be transformed from a human to a witch by pulling a string and another by turning the three-dimensional body; and corpse carriers with moving hands and feet. As in so much Balinese art, little resistance to change exists as long as it sits side by side with tradition and does not attempt to replace it. The experimentation is based mainly in new genres and the *dalang* perform the traditional work one night and the experimental another. This model of change and preservation is at the heart of the extraordinary dynamic behind Balinese performance. However, in the villages, the more traditional forms of presentation are almost always preferred. The only real exception to this is one young *dalang* who has recently become much sought after and includes a number of Westernised technical effects and innovative and humorous approaches to storytelling. One of his productions is looked at in detail later in this chapter.

In general, scenery in Wayang theatre is traditionally minimal. Two large demonic, multi-headed puppets frame the screen. The 'one thousand eyes' Butha Siu or Wisnumurti is always placed on the right side of the screen, while the 'nine eyes' Butha Sia or Ludramurti stands up on the left side. The *dalang* set their very first scene and define their performing area by planting these two puppets in the correct position. Except when these *butha* serve as characters, these puppets remain on their respective side of the acting area from the beginning until the end of the show. As a character, puppet Butha Siu is used to visualise the power of several good characters, while Butha Sia represents the power of many evil characters. Consequently, the puppets

Butha Siu and Butha Sia symbolise the two opposing forces, *rwa bhineda*, on the right and the left side, respectively. The slightly smaller *kayonan* or Tree of Life puppet represents other scenic images in a flexible manner. In addition to beginning a Wayang performance, it is used to shift one scene to another and to end a performance. This oval-shaped puppet often represents water, fire, wind, ocean, cloud, earth, forest, tree, house, etc. It is set within the acting area without changing the first basic framing of Butha Siu and Butha Sia. When manipulated in different specific ways, the *kayonan* can also represent a great variety of other images. As it is manipulated, the oil lamp that creates the shadow is partly covered with a petal of banana's log to enhance the dramatic atmosphere. Western performance storytelling traditions have no equivalent to this single object that can have so many symbolic uses and meanings. It is typical of the economy and flexibility of all Balinese approaches to staging devices and objects in general.

The only other scenic properties the *dalang* traditionally uses are the temple-gate *candi* puppet and the *kepuh* tree puppet. The *candi* puppet represents a holy place, heaven or a meditative space and is always found on the right side of the scene. The *kepuh* tree puppet represents a cemetery. The *kepuh* tree is thought to be occupied by many magical evil spirits and is conventionally placed on the left. In recent years, some of the younger *dalang* have experimented with other projections, coloured lights and objects, but this practice has not yet been fully developed and only a minority uses it. The traditional *dalang* would argue, in a way that is familiar to proponents of bare-stage Shakespeare, that the narrative alone is sufficient to trigger the imagination of the audience and that such devices are unnecessary.

At the heart of most Wayang Kulit performances is the close relationship between the *dalang* and the audience, transmitted mainly through humour, which is often one of the key elements that determine the success of a particular *dalang*. The *dalang* combines satirist and stand-up comedian as he creates the central dialogue between the servants who carry the burden of narrative and comment on it. The rich humour covers all manner of territory including puns, malapropisms, humorous voices, comic puppet movements, misunderstandings, mistaken identities, sexual innuendo, stupidity, arrogance, infidelity, corruption, deliberate trans-linguistic mistakes, etc. Even tourists and foreign media may come under his withering scrutiny. It all depends on time, place and circumstance. It is essential that the *dalang* is topical and current in his social, political and local outlook and this affects directly the way the audience responds. Many (perhaps most) comic dialogues are composed separately and interpolated into a variety of plays. As a *dalang* expands or modifies his jokes, some improvised comic dialogues made up at a particular performance may be retained for other performances

since there are no rules as to which comic dialogues can be used with any story. Interestingly, the Balinese see no problem for a serious temple event, such as a purification ceremony, to also involve a Wayang performance rich in humour: the serious and sacred can comfortably cohabit with the secular. It is tempting to compare this with the Elizabethan ability to switch back and forth between the holy and the tragic to the comic. The subtle separation in Bali is achieved simply by moving from the pre-performance ceremony in the sacred inner section of the temple to the middle or outer temple for the performance.

The four dominant comic characters in Wayang (the black, fat Twalen with his quick-and-sharp son Wredah, the braggart boisterous Delem and his slow younger brother Sangut) are, however, not just clowns. In some ways, they relate more to the philosophical clowns of Shakespeare than to the *Commedia dell'Arte* counterparts to which they are often compared. These court attendants, known as *Panasar* (foundation or base) characters, embody honesty and truthfulness and suggest ways to end corruption and dishonesty (de Boer, 1987b: 79–105). These dominant comic characters in Wayang often appear as moralistic agents who offer useful suggestions to their kings in times of misery or pressure. Historians suggest that these servants are indigenous Indonesian characters, since they are not part of the Indian epics but are always dominant in Wayang shows presenting the Indian epics. These historians also use the characters as evidence that Wayang may have originated in Indonesia.

The ancient manuscript *Darma Pawayangan* asserts the microcosmic and macrocosmic significance of these characters. In the microcosmos, 'Delem belongs to the point from which the heart hangs down, Twalen to that of the liver, Wredah to that of the kidneys, and Sangut to that of the bile' (Hooykaas, 1973: 21–2). In the macrocosmos, they are often identified with four aspects of the Highest Being; Twalen is the god *Acintya* who occupies the black part of fire; Wredah is the god *Sanghyang Tunggal* who occupies the white part of fire; Sangut is the *Sanghyang Suksma* who occupies the yellow part of fire; and Delem is the god *Brahma* who occupies the red part of fire. The clowns are thus in one sense aspects of the performer's own body, yet simultaneously they make up the cosmic fire of the High God. These comic servants often also have a role as a saviour, interceding between humans and God and they act as advisors to those who rule.

The common comic characters in Wayang are not all hypocrites, impostors and cowards of the Western comic theatre tradition that, in other ways, share some characteristics with the Balinese clowns. Rather, they are the voice of the civilised and divine. While a set comic character in Western comedies may appear in a few separate plays (*Brigella* in *Commedia*

dell'Arte, Karegoz in Turkish puppetry, Jan Klaasen in Dutch puppetry, Don Christobal in Spain, Petrushka in Russia, Vasilache in Rumania, Pavliha in Yugoslavia, Pulcinello in Italian puppetry or Policenelle in France) these characters in Wayang always appear in each and every performance of the Ramayana- and Mahabharata-based repertoire. It can be argued that ultimately Wayang uses comedy to comment on society, expose negative emotions and thoughts and suggest a better way to live. In this sense, most *dalang* would see that humour serves a more serious overall function, although many of the audience might only respond on the immediate, comic level.

The remaining core elements which the *dalang* uses in any performance are poetry and verse. Part of the improvisation in the performance of Wayang theatre also involves working with established *kakawin* verse and composing songs and poetry. Many *dalang* call this activity *ngawi kakawin*, which basically means to reinterpret and give new meaning to the *kakawin*. The *dalang* is able to move between Balinese and the classical *kakawin* language, changing and adding or substituting words and phrases. Precise rules govern this poetry concerning number of lines and syllables, according to the particular form. The *dalang* can combine different source lines and even construct new lines in a similar style and sound. When the newly constructed sequence does not completely match the rules, the *dalang* may avoid this verse conflict by speaking instead of singing the lines. In essence, the *dalang* is creating his verse script by borrowing, adapting, editing and adding to existing lines and phrases.

Most *dalang* discuss the influence of the stage, i.e. place, on their performance. Dalang feel there are two categories of performance venues: a generous and an ungenerous stage. The generous stage is typically supportive and lends itself to the performance's success, while an ungenerous stage tends to give a negative influence. This ungenerous stage is often referred to as a demon-occupied stage (*panggung gamangan* or median), because people, especially *dalang*, believe that demonic spirits (the Indian Natya Sastra calls them *vigna*) are being hostile and disruptive. The major indication of this demon-occupied stage is that the audience is not attentive. The performance atmosphere is busy and noisy, jokes fall flat and the *dalang* can feel it is a struggle to establish tranquillity and concentration. This is not so different, in effect, to the response of Western actors to certain stages that are considered difficult to play, whereas others seem to always work well in spite of the show. In common with the *dalang*, many Western actors are also deeply superstitious and indulge in rituals. The fear of speaking out loud the word 'Macbeth' in a rehearsal room is a good example. In most theatres across Europe and North America, many actors are disturbed and upset by this breach of superstitious law and in some theatre companies, the

guilty person must leave the room and 'purify' by uttering obscenities before returning to the room. Some theatres have even more detailed rules of purification. In Bali, the *dalang* also resorts to systems to conquer the evil spirits who are trying to disrupt his work.

A more experienced *dalang* might exert extra-theatrical approaches to pacify demonic spirits through dedicating an appropriate offering, *segehan*, and reciting the incantations for demons. He might dedicate offerings at each corner of the building before the performance in order to appease the Butha Kala demons. However, the *dalang* is also practical and uses skill-based devices to conquer the space. Typically, a *dalang* may attempt to shorten his performance by rendering only the main plot and eliminating subsidiary stories. He may attempt to enliven the performance by improvising, making adjustments, expanding the dance sequences, elaborating fighting scenes and perhaps giving less attention to philosophy and diction. The performance becomes more acrobatic and less edifying, but the audience is happy.

Similar worries about the place of performance relate to direction, as the *dalang* must ensure that the staging is correctly orientated to the correct holy place. It is all part of the *dalang's* sense of his spiritual role in addition to that of entertainer. To win God's favour, the Wayang performance is mostly expected to face the shrine, towards the pure direction, to offer the performance for God. In case the booth for any reason does not face the holy direction, the *dalang* needs to adjust his direction internally or spiritually until he reaches the right direction and feels that he has shown the proper respect for the dwelling place of God; he tries to feel that he himself is the dwelling place of God. Only then can a performance begin and the *dalang* feel confident enough to face the many performance challenges ahead. In addition to all the preparation already explained, he is expected to deal with the unexpected.

The unexpected includes, for example, the inability to find a specific puppet in the midst of rapid sequences involving the passing back and forth of numerous puppet characters in a battle sequence. Some *dalang* might grab another, probably a comic character, and desperately improvise until an assistant locates the absentee, but others would simply leave the screen blank and wait until it is right to continue. The *dalang*, spiritually ready, technically organised, flanked by his assistants and watched by a waiting orchestra, is ready to begin.

The following description is fairly typical of a Wayang Kulit performance that is part of a temple event, although in this case it is by the young and popular *dalang*, I Wayan Nardayana. It took place at the temple Pura Desa of Batuan village on Monday, 27 March 2006 in conjunction with the village purification in anticipation of the upcoming Nyepi, lunar New

Year. In general, it followed fairly typically the rules and sequences already described but a few surprises and departures are worth noting. This *dalang* already has a strong following and is the highest earning *dalang* in Bali; he is known for using clever humour and employing technical, special effects. Some more traditional *dalang* have some reservations about the way he innovates, but the audiences clearly adore his performances. Like any *dalang*, he will always be acutely aware of the audience response and vary his performance according to the immediate affect it is having.

Before the puppet performance, the ceremony is, as always, in full swing with large numbers of villagers milling around the outer and middle courtyard in particular. In the inner courtyard, villagers gather to pray and to present offerings. During the short ceremony, the worshippers place flowers behind their ears as a gateway to the gods and they are blessed with holy water. This ceremonial aspect is an important prelude to the performance as it is a conditioning into the more serious purification process of which the Wayang itself is a part. The offerings contain fruits, flowers, chicken, pork, incense and rice. There is no absolute rule, but generally men use white and fairly neutral-coloured clothes for attending the temple, whereas women wear bright colours such as pink, blue, orange and green. Women carry the offerings sometimes on their heads and sometimes in baskets or in metal containers.

Everyone finds a place on the concrete floor to pray as they sit and remove their shoes. Each person puts a small offering of flowers (needed for praying) and incense next to them on the ground, usually displayed on bases made out of banana leaf. Some people prepare small bunches of flowers arranged on a cone made of banana leaf. As the ceremony progresses, an all-female gamelan orchestra plays in the background and a female singer sings into a microphone. After the holy water blessing at the end, the priest gives out rice to the attendants to distribute to the worshipers, who stick the rice onto their foreheads and throats as a sign that they have been purified and blessed. Putting the rice on the forehead signifies a request to the gods to bless your mind and on the throat is a request to the gods to bless your heart. Once the rituals are complete, the villagers head off to watch the other events around the temple.

While this ceremony is taking place, the *dalang* and his team are preparing for the performance that will follow. This *dalang* has a larger than usual retinue of assistants and, unusually, two trucks and a minibus to transport his equipment and staff; this is an indication of his commercial success and popularity. The orchestra's instruments are all arranged in a specific pattern and order behind where the *dalang* will sit, in the centre of the screen 60cm away from it. The screen is made of white, cotton cloth and suspended within a wooden frame that is painted red and gold,

decorated with carved animal faces painted in pink, red and green. At the base of the screen on the *dalang's* side is a log of a banana tree into which puppets can be stuck at various points during the performance, as the interior is soft. The screen itself and the platform that the *dalang* and musicians sit on are raised above the level of the concrete ground on which the audience will sit, so it resembles a low Western stage. However, what is entirely different and unique about the performance that will soon follow is that it can be viewed from multiple perspectives. It is not just in-the-round theatre, as the villagers may watch from the front, as though viewing a proscenium stage or from the back where they will not see shadows but the entire back-stage performance of musicians, *dalang* and his assistants. It is also possible to see from the side that allows partial view of both perspectives and spectators are allowed to move around from time to time and witness from different points as the performance progresses. The audience who stay at the front have an entirely different viewing experience from those at the rear.

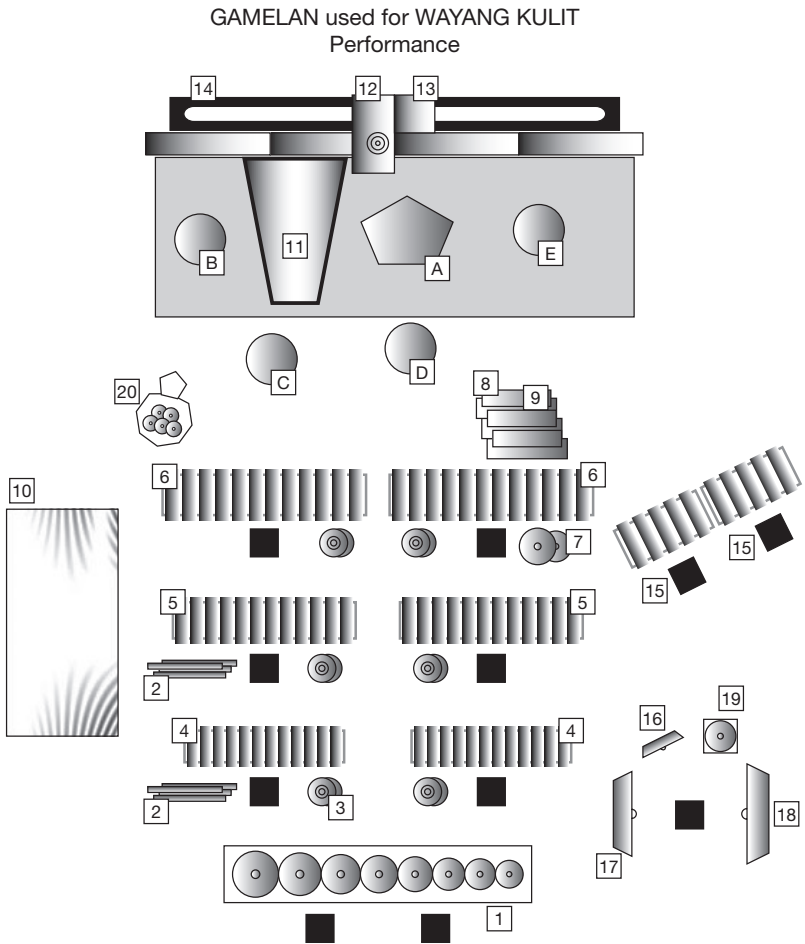
The area behind the screen is crowded with musical instruments, electrics and sound-system cables, musicians and microphones on stands for the three female singers/narrators that will support the *dalang* and four assistants. These assistants will pass puppets back and forth, operate light and sound cues, prepare small props and help the *dalang* by passing water to him to drink and mop his brow. This is unusual as most *dalang* work alone on the narrative aspects of performance and are supported only by two assistants, one on each side. For this performance, a maze of entangled wires is everywhere, some connected to a home-made dimming system constructed from domestic light-dimmer switches. Above the screen is a small oil lamp that is mainly there as a decorative token reference to the oil light that usually illuminates the whole show. This *dalang* favours an electric source light that fits more comfortably with his use of special effects, with coloured lights and a smoke machine that is suspended in the centre at the top of the shadow screen. Within this packed, small area behind the screen the real drama will take place as the performance begins.

Figure 2.5 shows the positions of the large team of assistants and musicians behind the screen, all packed into a small area a few metres square.

At 9:00 p.m. the *dalang's* assistants and musicians take their places.

A high-pitched note from the gong strikes to indicate the beginning of the shadow performance and to get the attention of the audience. The lights behind the screen are turned off as a signal that all is about to begin. There are now already about 60 onlookers watching the preparations behind the screen, some gently pushing each other to get a better view from behind black, short curtains that extend a metre and a half above the ground and partially separate, without obscuring the view of, the performers from the





*Figure 2.5* Wayang Kulit

**Instruments**

- 1 Riong
- 2 Kepyak (bamboo flutes) × 8
- 3 Ceng ceng Kopyak (big cymbals) × 6
- 4 Kantil × 2
- 5 Gangsa × 2
- 6 Gender Rambut × 2
- 7 Kajar (top) and Tambur (bottom)
- 8 Three medium drums
- 9 Two small drums
- 10 Area for women chorus (3) and musical equipment
- 11 Puppet box

- 12 Smoke machine, with oil lamp on top
- 13 Modern theatre light for special effects and additional red and green light
- 14 Ornate screen *Kelir*
- 15 Calung × 2
- 16 Klentong (small upright gong)
- 17 Kempur
- 18 Gong
- 19 Klenang (small flat gong)
- 20 Rincik (small ceng ceng)

Black boxes represent the musicians.

- A Dalang
- B Left assistant
- C Back assistant
- D Middle assistant
- E Right assistant

observers at either side of the screen at the rear. In the main audience area in front of the screen, about 200 villagers are finding places to sit on the concrete ground. The singer and gamelan begin to establish the atmosphere by playing an overture. The music progresses with an interplay between the vocal singing of the three female narrator/singers and the instrumental music.

The *dalang* enters the performance space and commences an offering ritual. He takes his position on a small bench and concentrates on the ritual. An assistant has prepared the offerings that sit on top of the puppet box. The *dalang*'s offering ritual includes lighting incense, praying, offering flowers to the gods and sprinkling holy water and rice on himself, the stage and the screen; he also places petals on his head and on the light box. After the *dalang* has completed the offering, the assistants also pray and bless themselves with holy water and rice. The clearing of the offerings follows as the flowers and other items are removed from above the box and out of the performance space.

At this point, the assistants unlock the puppet box and carefully bring out the puppets. One helps to untangle puppets while the others help to separate the puppets according to side of entry, as evil characters are taken to the left side of the screen and the good ones are taken to the right (as described earlier in this chapter). The assistants empty the box of puppets and place some against the screen and lay some on the floor by their sides. The overall effect is of a full company of actors appearing on stage at the top of a show. Although not all the puppets will necessarily be used during every performance, they all belong to the story. By the end of preparations, there are about 20 puppets on either side of the screen, framing the all-important Tree of Life puppet in the centre and the other Tree of Life puppets that have different designs, according to their later functions. After 15 minutes

of overture, the *dalang* establishes his presence from behind the screen with a sharp tap on the hinged side of the puppet box using the rattle that he holds with his right foot. The *dalang* swirls the Tree puppet around the screen, ritually to begin the performance, and then introduces the main characters one by one until the screen is cleared of the cast. As they are rapidly introduced, the orchestra plays and sometimes the female narrators sing. As soon as the Tree puppet appears, the audience fall silent for a few moments. The *dalang* of this performance also incorporates a flashing white light from the back and smoke effects from an electric smoke machine. He sometimes uses this effect when he needs to change the character that is on the screen, as it gives an illusion of the character transforming into another, rather than simply being exchanged for another. The audience applauds happily when they see these simple, but effective, special effects. The Tree of Life is the last puppet left and begins the dance again. This time the lights are more embellished. The music becomes louder and the red lights are darker and more intense, smoke effects suddenly appear as the *dalang* quickly exchanges the Tree of Life puppet with other, scenic, background puppets. The scene is transformed and set for the story and narration to commence. Throughout this preliminary sequence, the audience in front of the screen has already swollen to about 1,500 and the area is packed, with additional villagers standing in rows at the side of the sitting audience. At the rear of the screen, over a hundred observers are jostling to get a better look at the action of the performers.

It is now past 9:40 p.m. and the story itself not yet begun. The excitement in the audience builds in anticipation. These long preliminary sequences, from the blessing ceremony in the inner temple to the rituals backstage and the musical overture, are an essential part of the performance process; the story that will follow is completely integrated into the other aspects of temple and village life. The morals and meanings buried within the story are automatically understood in this context and need little highlighting by the *dalang*. In addition, the enjoyment of the performance is increased and heightened by this ritualistic and ceremonial conditioning process, as the villagers have had time to anticipate the pleasures that will come.

The *dalang* now begins the main, long evening of work as he tells the story through the sequences and events described generically earlier in the chapter. Throughout the performance, the audience in front of the screen grows larger, reaching at its peak around 2,000, including a full range of villagers from babies to their grandparents. Generally, it is a male audience standing around the perimeter and the women and children and some men sitting in the centre. Gales of laughter punctuate numerous scenes with the servant/clown puppets, which carry the main burden of

telling the story. In between the traditional scenes are local and contemporary jokes and references, sometimes drawn out for long periods by the *dalang* by techniques of exaggeration, repetition and pauses; he is clearly enjoying the control he has of the event. His assistants, on either side and behind, frantically pick up and pass the puppets back and forth. He cleverly blends verbal humour and comic voices with deft manipulation of the puppets, sometimes moving them subtly and at other times sweeping them energetically across the screen; his special effect coloured lights and smoke enhance the moments of transformation and drama in an innovative and theatrical way. Perspiration pours from him as he uses immense physical energy in controlling the orchestra by beating his foot and hand against the puppet box, constant speaking and singing and manipulation of dozens of different puppets, some comic characters such as Delem requiring additional manipulation of a mouth that can move along with the words.

The frenzied performance reaches a climax in the final fighting or battle scene between Hanoman and the giant demon. During this sequence, puppets are actually hurled across the screen, some with specific weapons alongside them, as the orchestra builds the tempo to the cues of the *dalang*. Unusually, this *dalang* keeps the battle short and it is over within a few minutes, whereas many more traditional *dalang* elongate it to more than double the length. The audience all know that the Wayang is nearly complete and some then begin to head off home at the end of a long night. The performance quickly comes to an end, close to midnight, with final social comments about present state of life in Bali and the defeat of the evil demon, who is not killed but transformed into a priest.

From the prayers at the beginning of the evening to the transformation of the demon at the end, the purification focus of the temple events has been clear. The performance was a part of an overall scheme and not a separate element in itself. In many ways, the *dalang* has combined the function of priest and entertainer and reinforced messages about the way the world should be. The Wayang shadow performance demonstrates extraordinary technical skill and individual, virtuoso performance abilities, but it is also a form of profound and fascinating storytelling that allows intellectual and emotional creativity to flourish. The outer structure is at first sight rigid, but within that framework this *dalang*, like so many others, has demonstrated a wide range of individual choice, taste and personally developed skill. In Chapter 3, it is not a central figure that is the focus of performance, but the overall ritual experience of an event. In Sanghyang, the individual performer is not concerned with demonstration of technique or depiction of character. Unlike Wayang, this form, although aesthetically pleasing to the outside observer, is concerned with devotion and intense religious

50 *Wayang shadow theatre*

experience for villagers and performers. Unlike Wayang there is in effect no narrative and no concern with entertaining and communicating with colloquial interspersions to the worshippers. Sanghyang is far removed from Western theatre and most other Balinese performance traditions.

### 3 Sanghyang trance performance

Trance performance in contemporary Bali includes Sutri, female fire dance; Onying, male *kris*, sword dance; and Sanghyang, spirit dance. These dances are derived from ancient, animistic practices. The Sutri, Onying and Sanghyang are called ritual trance dances because the performance's movements, gestures and choreography are highly stylistic. The observers also receive divine guidance or direction while the dancer is in trance. In addition to the actual dances are the performers: *balian*, healers who are human channels of spirits, and *sadeg*, shaman. Healers' and shamans' performances function as moderators or bridges between this world and the spiritual realm. They access information from the invisible-upper-world and then transmit it for the community through traditional speech and diction. These practices are believed to be the origins of the current shadow-puppet theatre. Although these forms have been transformed into a number of fire and *kris* sword dances for commercial tourist purposes, the authentic forms still survive in some villages on the island.

Of about 20 extant types of trance dance in Bali, Sanghyang dedari, Sanghyang jaran, Sutri and other lesser-known Sanghyang variations are thought to be the oldest surviving forms of ceremonial dance. Their origins pre-date the Balinese/Hindu tradition into which it was absorbed. They still exist today only in one or two mountain villages in the north of Bali and one or two in the east of the island and are rarely performed, except when disease or disaster strikes a community and a ceremony is required. These trance ceremonies have been studied a little in the past, particularly by Margaret Mead and other anthropologists in the 1930s, but not described and analysed from a performance perspective. Some of the guidebooks and introductory books to the Balinese culture wrongly imply they are easy to witness and often performed; in fact, they are increasingly rare and near extinction.

Within the ceremony is exquisite choral singing and the elaborate invocation of trance in two (sometimes more) pre-pubescent females. Once in

trance, a synchronised dance takes place, with the eyes of the dancers always closed. The dance often involves extraordinary feats of balance, courage and dancing through fire. The techniques used will be described in detail and, it is argued, these same techniques might be transposed for use in other acting/performance traditions and training, including Western acting. This chapter presents a specific case study from a small village in the north of Bali and explores the tourist, non-sacred and largely faked versions of trance that have sprung up in recent years together with a discussion as to how they affect the purer versions.

Sanghyang is a spirit and when it enters and animates a dancer's body, the Balinese call it Sanghyang dance, *tari sanghyang*. The personal name and identity of the dancer is ignored or temporarily suspended until the ceremony is over; an external spirit is manipulating that person, using the dancer as a 'mask', a 'puppet' or a 'dance vehicle'.

Identified by the specific spirit that descends, possesses, employs and manipulates the dancer's body, about 20 different Sanghyang exist. Simply add the name of the specified spirit to Sanghyang as the modifier: when the spirit of a *jaran* (horse) enters the body, the dancer behaves like a horse and people would call the dance Sanghyang jaran, the spirit of a horse. Similarly, when the spirit of a celestial nymph, *dedari*, enters and animates the body, the dancer acts like a female nymph that is called Sanghyang dedari, the celestial nymph sanghyang. Jane Belo's survey in *Trance in Bali* (Belo, 1960: 202) reports several other variant names of Sanghyang, such as *lelipi* (snake), *celeng* (pig), *kuluk* (puppy), *bojog* (monkey), *sampat* (broom), *jaran gading* (yellow shiny horse), *jaran putih* (white horse), *dongkang* (toad/frog), *penyu* (turtle) and *sembe* (lantern), etc. Some of these forms employ particular sacred masks and a wide degree of varieties and sophistication of costume that represent and indicate the type of descending spirit in their performance, but many are simply dressed and without masks. The form involves animate and inanimate objects of possession: a lantern or a human being can be the central focus of possession during the ceremony. The inanimate object is believed to be able to move in some way without assistance when the spirit descends into it. According to the elderly leader of Sanghyang in the hamlet of Duda, in the village of Jungu, in the eastern region of Karangasem, the ritual of Sanghyang began as a response to spirits invading the village. Objects and animals materialised at night inside and outside villagers' houses. The effects of the spirits' presence manifested in illness or disease of the crops. Each form of Sanghyang was devised as a way to pacify the spirits by inviting them to come down and dance with the villagers and be happy. The idea was that they would then go away satisfied and leave the villagers alone at other times. Jungu is the only village in Bali where so many Sanghyang forms still exist, but they are rarely performed





*Figure 3.1* Sanghyang deling performers entering trance through puppets



*Figure 3.2* Two young Sanghyang deling performers in trance

these days. The most likely time is during the rainy season close to the lunar New Year, but if any rain actually falls the ceremony is cancelled; for reasons no longer known, the performer must not come into any contact with water, even rain. This almost guarantees that Sanghyang very rarely takes place.

Each type of performance often has further sub-categories. For example, the existing masked Sanghyang trance dance at Ketewel village consists of nine refined female characters, such as the celestial nymphs Took, Kentrut, Gudita, Gagar Mayang, Menaka, Sulasih, Tunjung Beru, Nilotama and Supraba. Each distinctive mask receives the name of the respective spirit – the mask is believed to be the vehicle each for of these legendary, celestial nymphs.

From an anthropological point of view these events could be described as trance possession or purification ceremonies; seen from the performance or acting perspective, Sanghyang is an animation, in which the animator is invisible. This is not because the animator is hiding backstage like a puppeteer, but because no one can see the person or from where or how the animation is controlled. The invisible animator could be employing string, leather, rods, a glove, a stick or other tools used by puppeteers, but the details remain unseen and unknown to the audience, except perhaps the priest. Given this, it can be argued that instead of a person training as an actor and then becoming a character, during Sanghyang a person becomes a puppet for a spirit to manipulate. The product as a performance is a form of acting, but unlike any acting described and practised by professionals. In fact, it is essential for the Sanghyang performer not be a professional or trained dancer as it is not their skill that will be demonstrated but that of the possessing spirit.

The process of acting/movement/dance in Sanghyang may be similar to Western acting traditions in a few ways: transmission of inner emotional feelings to outer, visible limbs and gestures. However, the Sanghyang animation from inside the dancer's body is without any connection to personalised sense memory or emotional recall. In fact, the dancer/performer does not remember anything at all about the event when the trance is over. Similarly, although an outside observer might focus on the aesthetics and techniques, the Balinese audience is only concerned with the spiritual affect it has. During a performance, the Balinese witness is there for religious purposes and not as an audience in the Western sense of the word.

Several other myths surround the origin of Sanghyang, according to local phenomena and faith. Performer and teacher I Made Sidja gives one of the most seemingly rational among these; it is based on some anecdotal, orally transmitted data, but not documented history and goes something like as follows:

*Desa-kala-patra* (time-space-circumstance) affect Balinese life deeply and throughout Balinese thought and existence a strong awareness of these exists; much literature explicitly recognises the power of these combined forces on everyday life. Just before winter, in the transition between the fifth and sixth moon/month of the Balinese lunar calendar, when the flow of hot wind from the south is competing with the flow of cold wind from the north, the Balinese annually suffer several illnesses: stomach ache, chicken pox, vomiting, diarrhoea, asthma and epidemics that cause sickness and some deaths. To drive out epidemics, people would gather together around holy temples bringing with them various magic items that were thought to protect them: 'cheerful leaves' (*don girang*) and rags of weaved coconut leaves and white lime in the form of a plus (+) sign to represent a mystical bird foot print, *tampak dara*. However, the most important of their activities was the creation of loud noise, *nobleq*, to banish the fear of death and disease that haunted and overwhelmed entire villages. As people originally did not possess any metal musical instrument, they sang songs or banged on objects as an attempt to expel the sickness and drive the evil spirits away. Rice farmers who may have come from their farm may have joined this *nobleq* by beating on their farming tools.

In the climax of the season, as the illnesses increasingly took more casualties, during the evening people would make even louder sounds with wooden bells, *kulkul*, make loud percussive sounds, *keplugan*, and other frightening noises using bamboo, wood and other materials. Making noise with these objects is a way to obtain power or feel more powerful in the face of danger; people would walk to places they feared, cemeteries, rivers, jungles and dark roads. The aim was to purge the villagers' fear by visiting, taming and familiarising themselves with the feared places and images.

The gathering at a temple by a community in a state of high tension, near hysteria, heightened by the percussive sounds and fear, led to deep prayer and occasional natural trance. In that state of trance, villagers would naturally refer to supposed methods of defence against evil. Typically, according to earlier customs, they might ask for fire with which to bathe their bodies by brushing themselves with torches as a form of protection and purification. Occasionally, they may mention (among others) names of common spirits. When referring to powerful horse spirits, for example, they might name specifically Sukanta, Senia Sakti, Walaka, Abra Puspa, Oncersrawa, Purnama Sada or Turanggana. Each is a known horse spirit that is thought to be a vehicle of a specific demi-god. When they mentioned *sarwa sari*, bunch of flowers, they refer to Sanghyang dedari – this is the Sanghyang of celestial nymphs

that is related in tradition to those specific flowers. Villagers would perceive that the choreography and vocabulary of movements used by those in trance were improvisational. In time, the performances developed common patterns and each Sanghyang performance/ceremony today generally observes a certain structure, from the opening through to the climax, and uses a specific recurring vocabulary of movements and choreography that reflect the character or type of a given spirit: strong, soft, coarse, gentle, subtle, masculine, feminine, robust or calm would define the spirit profile well.

Sanghyang came into being with its own significant exorcism function, underlying myth, movement, choreography, costumes and associated objects, accompanied by vocal music through a number of ritual procedures. The move from animistic ritual to entertainment through a form of dance began with Sanghyang; it began to be performed for every temple anniversary, even without trance. A communal group from one village would commonly invite Sanghyang performers from another village and in this way non-sacred performance began to emerge. As Sanghyang *dedari* developed over generations, it produced a number of offshoots that became performances in their own right, divorced from the original ritual functions. The ceremony was eventually accompanied by Sanghyang *legong*, the central female dance section of the ritual, from which the current classical Legong dance was developed. Similarly, the performances were adapted and developed into a number of classical music and dance forms accompanied by classical music. Examples of this are Telek (a dance using refined masks), Legong Jobog, Lasem, Kuntul and Tunjang. Metallophone musical ensembles, known as Gamelan Palegongan also developed to accompany the performances. Therefore this is a likely journey from basic, instinctive protective rituals to aesthetically focused secular dance performance and the surviving Sanghyang ceremonies are a remnant of the distant, animist past. Today, they are therefore a fascinating window to that past and are important for understanding where many contemporary forms have originated. In Bali, the past and present can often sit comfortably side by side.

A typical performance of Sanghyang – any type of Sanghyang trance including Sutri – may chronologically be divided into four phases: pre-preparation, preliminary ceremony, main dancing section and the final, restoring conclusion. The following explains each stage in greater detail for all types of Sanghyang; later in this chapter a specific performance of one form, Sanghyang *deling*, is looked at in detail specific to that form.

Several terms refer to the initiation of the performance, such as worshipping, *penyungsungan*; fanning of incense smoke onto a dancer, *panudusan*; invoking, *nedunang*; reporting, *matur piuning*; and waking up, *nangiang*.

These terms suggest that the restless spirits are either wandering around or flying in the sky, or sleeping in their dwelling—distant—sacred place. People need to call, worship, invite or request the spirits to wake up and to descend, to dance and to celebrate in a rendezvous between spirit and villagers/worshippers who seek spiritual guidance, solace, protection, continuing security and increasing prosperity. At this starting ritual stage (second phase), more than a dozen female chorus members sing the Kidung Wargasari song in unison to invoke the blessing of the gods and goddesses. In order to understand the underlying idea of the commencing phase, the first typical stanza of the chorus is transcribed in translation as follows:

<i>Ida ratu saking lubur</i>	Honourable spirits from the upper sacred world
<i>Kaula nunas lugrane</i>	We request your blessing
<i>Mangda sampun tityang tandrub</i>	To release us from ignorance
<i>Mengayat betara sami</i>	In worshiping all protecting spirits
<i>Tityang ngaturang pejati</i>	We give you these offerings of
<i>Canang suci lan daksina</i>	Pure flowers and these other symbols of the worldly life
<i>Sami sampun puput</i>	We have now completed
<i>Pratingkahing saji</i>	The arrangement of our offerings

The second song is Kidung pangasti, sung to show adoration and worship of the spirit. The third song is Kidung hyang dedara, sung to accompany the incense smoke-fanning activity, when smoke is blown onto the dancers faces. At this stage, the dancers, while closing their eyes and kneeling, immerse their faces in the smoke of burning incense or fragrant sandalwood. The Kukus Harum, 'Fragrant Smoke', song is eventually sung to motivate and lead the dancers into trance, to put them into an altered state of consciousness. It is important to note that to the Balinese, even today, a state of trance is accepted naturally. In the West, on the contrary, trance is fascinating and is generally considered a rare and potentially harmful state. Psychologists refer to such self-induced trance alongside hypnotic trance and religious trance from meditation as dissociated states of consciousness. Perhaps the artist, during a height of creativity, slips into a similar state; it may explain why artists do not remember how, after an act of creative intensity, they achieved what they did.

A number of coconut skins are burned to begin the incense smoking ceremony, as legend has it that the spirits always descend via smoke. The following songs are sung when the dancers are bathed in the smoke in front of the shrine in order to invite the spirit down. Depending on the village,



Figure 3.3 Sanghyang deling performer walking through fire

the song may be referred to as *Gending panudusan*, the smoking song or *Panguntap*, the invitation song.

***Kembang Jenar***

*Kembang Jenar mangundang*

*Undang dedari agung*

*Sane becik becik dewa undang*

*Sang Supraba Tunjung Beru*

*Tunjung beru mangrangsuk  
busana*

*Penganggo anggo*

*Pasaluke baju simping emas*

*Mesat miber ngagegana*

*Ngagegana mangelo ngelo  
ngaja kanginan*

*Ditu dedari matangguk jero*

*Tangane bek madaging sekar*

*Ngagegana tekdang ratu  
kagunung agung*

**Blooming Flower**

This blooming flower invites the  
great

Celestial nymphs

The fine ones are invited

The angels Supraba and Tunjung  
Beru

Together with the celestial nymph

They don the special headdress

They are putting on their golden  
shoulder decorations

Flying quickly in the sky

In the shining sky, from the north  
east

Where the home of the nymphs lies

Their hands full of flowers

Flying, they reach the great  
mountain

<i>Jalan dedari matangguk jero</i>	As a place for the nymphs to land
<i>Kedapane malelepe</i>	On the lush young leaves
<i>Malelepe tekedang ratu</i>	That spring from the great mountain
<i>kagunung agung</i>	
<i>Manuju munyin gamelan</i>	They head towards the gamelan with the beautiful blended sounds of
<i>Kempur sari candetan gender</i>	chimes and gongs

This song stops whenever the spirit is considered to have entered the dancer's body, otherwise the singer repeats the song until the dancer collapses back over the lap of their assigned assistant or companion. There is often a degree of tension among the audience until this moment, as sometimes the trance does not occur and it is deemed that the spirits have decided not to descend and the ceremony is abandoned. The collapse is a clue that the spirit has descended and entered the dancer's body. As the companion lifts her body up from behind, the next song follows:

<b><i>Mara Bangun</i></b>	<b>Lifting Up</b>
<i>Mara-mara bangun</i>	Just waking up, their movement is
<i>maonced-oncedan (2 ×)</i>	unbalanced
<i>Nyuleleg nyulempoh, enjubin</i>	I fan the smoke over them while
<i>tityang roko (2 ×)</i>	they still bend over
<i>Eda kema jani mani puan</i>	Don't leave now but tomorrow
<i>kema (2 ×)</i>	
<i>Pangda pangda kado pang</i>	Work hard for us and stay here until
<i>dini kasanja (2 ×)</i>	late

Once the dancers enter trance, they are carried over men's shoulders from the most inner temple into the dancing arena in the second temple courtyard, where they begin to dance, usually accompanied by about 30 male and 30 female chorus members.

<b><i>Dewi Ayu</i></b>	<b>Beautiful Angel</b>
<i>Dewi ayu dewi suci Ida lunga</i>	Beautiful holy nymphs leisurely walk
<i>mangulangun</i>	around
<i>Mangungsi ke gunung sekar</i>	Heading to the mountain flowers
<i>Tetamanan bagus dedara</i>	In the beautiful park of celestial beings
<i>Mangulati sekar tunjung</i>	They look for lotus flowers
<i>Tunjung emas tunjung kuning</i>	Golden lotus, yellow lotus
<i>Lelakon sami mangindang</i>	Walking is flying



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<i>Mangindang sisin telaga</i>	Flying over the pool
<i>Mangindangi I capung emas</i>	Together with the golden dragonflies
<i>Mekadi kupu-kupu matarum</i>	And butterflies they dance
<i>Metarum makepet mas dadua</i>	They dance with a pair of golden fans
<i>Manyaliog mauderan</i>	Sweeping around everywhere
<i>Tetanjeke manolih-nolih</i>	Sometimes they perch and glance around
<i>Manolih juru kidunge</i>	Looking at the choir singers
<i>Juru kidung sampun madampyak</i>	The chorus gathers closely together and watches attentively
<i>Karsan ida nunas lungsuran sekar</i>	Expecting beautiful blessings
<i>Picayang dewa picayang</i>	Please bless us
<i>Icenin juru kidunge</i>	Please bless the chorus celestial nymphs

The Sanghyang may step and dance upon burned coconut husks or shells. As the dancers are placed in the dancing arena, the melody player initiates the male chanting chorus. He begins with four beats of ostinatic musical composition.

This chanting music accompanies the dance until the dancers collapse, falling to the ground simultaneously. Each dancer's assistant will come and lift the dancers as they collapse at the end of each composition. When the female chorus begins, they resume the dance, over and over, accompanied alternately by the male and then the female chorus.

Since there no written story exists for the performance, its underlying plot, theme, characters and ideas can only be inferred from the song, Dewa Ayu, 'Beautiful Angel'. The lyrics, looked at in more detail later in this chapter in relation to Sanghyang deling, for example, indicate specific types of movement appropriate to the spirit that is being summoned. A director or choreographer will immediately recognise the language of the detailed movement/mood suggestions. Other types of spirits have similar songs, with variations in the details. Then an eight-beat melodic syllable is produced over the interlocking musical chant.

In contemporary Bali, this part has been expanded considerably, composed and re-composed and choreographed mainly for tourist entertainment. This type of performance is popularly known as the monkey dance in reference to a fragment of the Ramayana entitled the 'Abduction of Sita' that it accompanies. The music and singing is thereby completely transformed out of the original context and adding the narrator provides



occasional narration and dialogue. Since this secular version is now performed so frequently because of intense tourist demand, the costumes, dance movements and choreography of the traditional version have undergone a substantial transformation, with growing sophistication. However, the vocabulary and technical musical aspects mostly remain intact in traditional village performances. The leader of the chanting controls the musical dynamic in accordance with the dance cadences – the music follows the dancers. The leader controls the tempo by continually calling out loudly the syllable ‘pung’. The singer often initiates the song only to be followed by the chorus.

Then the next pair of songs given below follow:

***Sekar Mas***

*Sekar mas ngareronce*  
*Sekaran mangigel gambuh*  
*Gambuh di rejang kendran*

*Tetabuhan ma-asib-asih*  
*Kadi sunari angin*  
*Matanjek magulu wangsul*

*Ida arsa mangendon joged*

*Manyoged di pasar agung*

***Sekar Sandat***

*Sekar Sandat gagubahan*  
*Aturin wiyadara*  
*Ida arsa mangendon joged*

*Manyoged di pasar agung*

*Sampun janten sampun*  
*janten*

*Pangibing sami sampun*  
*mangambyar*

*Gegambelan lempung manis*  
*Nyuregseg raris nyalempoh*

*Minggir, Minggir, Minggir,*  
*Minggir*

**Golden Flower**

A bunch of golden flowers  
The same as in the Gambuh dance  
The female Gambuh dance in  
Kendran

The music is so sensual and moving  
Just like a bamboo wind chime  
Ringing alongside the movements of  
the feet and neck

Sometimes She wants to watch the  
Joged folk dance

Sometimes She dances in the great  
market

**Sandat Flower**

We offer beautiful sandat flowers  
Offerings for the celestial nymph  
She wants to watch the Joged folk  
dance

To dance at the great market

Surely She must be there

The guests spread out ready to join  
the dance

The gamelan music is sweet and soft  
Playing alongside the movements of  
feet

Stay further and further away

62 *Sanghyang trance performance*

<i>Suling papat rebab dadua</i>	Listen to the four flutes and two Rebab instruments
<i>Sunari katiben angin</i>	Wind blows the wind chime
<i>Cemarane sriat sriut</i>	The trees are swaying

The dance composition is not traditionally set up and choreographed but is spontaneously improvised. The dancers perform many of the movements in unison but sometimes they alternate and at times the dance becomes wild and the dancers seem oblivious of each other. The dancing emphasises swaying movements, *ngelo*, and repeated fan manipulation. In the climax, especially during Sutri and the horse Sanghyang, the dancers jump into the fire, stepping over it repeatedly and scattering burning embers. In the horse Sanghyang, the dancer even chews on some of the charcoal from the burnt incense.

The male Kecak chorus enhances the beauty of the performance with interlocking rhythms that work with the cadence of the dancers' movements – chanting the sound syllable 'chak' on a certain melody, keeping time by calling out 'pung'. Some say that the chorus members' chanting is the soul of the performance. This is the male chorus that is transposed into the tourist performances and presented as traditional Balinese dance to the audience. In reality, the chorus was extracted from this trance tradition and re-choreographed with the Ramayana extract (mentioned earlier) in the late 1920s/early 1930s, probably by the German artist Walter Spies.

The following song accompanies the dance in Sanghyang dedari.

<i>Menuh gambir gadung melati</i>	Many flowers of menuh, gambir, gadung and melati
<i>Sandingin jempaka petak</i>	Complemented by white jempaka flowers
<i>Madampyak tumbuh di Gunung</i>	All grow on the mountain
<i>Tetanduran widya dari</i>	They are the flowers of the celestial nymphs
<i>Tempub manis manyoyorin</i>	Fascinating, sweet and alluring
<i>Dedarine ampuang aus</i>	Wind blows the angels
<i>Maider mangalap sekar</i>	While picking up the flowers that are around
<i>Sekar emas gulu wangsul</i>	Golden flowers, using bird-like movements of the neck
<i>Sweca idewa neduning</i>	She deigns to descend
<i>Sweca idewa ngigelin</i>	She deigns to dance
<i>Gending guntang gula milir</i>	Over the bamboo music and the song

<i>Gending guntang gula milir</i>	Over the bamboo music and the sweet song
<i>Igel-igel ida cara garuda matangkis</i>	Her dance resembles the movements of the mighty bird Garuda
<i>Igel-igel ida cara garuda matangkis</i>	Her dance resembles the movements of the mighty bird Garuda
<i>Kecag kecog gilag gileg ngilu bau</i>	She steps and hops while turning her neck
<i>Kecag kecog gilag gileg ngilu bau</i>	She hops and steps while turning her neck

The mood, tempo, emotion and expression of dance are bound tightly with the accompanying song; so much corresponds between the lyrics and the movement. There are many specific movement-oriented phrases such as *karag kirig*, back and forth, or *tebuk api dong ceburin*, jump into fire. One way of understanding what is happening here, from a performance rather than a religious or ceremonial perspective, is that the lyrics are guiding or helping to indicate choreography to the dancers even though they are in trance. So, although the movements and gestures are improvised and not rehearsed, structure exists and, to some extent, choreographic command is provided by the lyrics. Combined with the discipline of rhythms, a form of basic choreographic control is in place. The dancers are, in effect, told when to hop like birds and when to sway and move their necks. As in hypnotic suggestion, the young dancers are guided through the whole ceremony and will remember nothing of it as they awake at the end.

The words of the song also identify precisely the type of Sanghyang. Just as the same songs here describe the movements of the celestial nymphs in Sanghyang dedari, so too with the song in the horse Sanghyang:

### *Sanghyang Jaran*

*Ikut nyane kenjir kori* (2 ×)

*Dangkark dikrik di pasisi*  
(2 ×)

*Tepuk api dong ceburin*

*Macan loreng*

*Mangelur tengah alase* (2 ×)

*I jaran jekeh mangetor* (2 ×)

*Tepuk api dong ceburin*

### **Horse Spirit**

The tail growing from his back

Dancing like a crazy horse on the beach

When encountering fire, leaps through it

There is a tiger with beautiful coloured markings

Growing in the forest

The horse is desperate and scared

When he meets fire, he leaps through it

In the village of Ketewel, the Sanghyang shares many characteristics with other Sanghyang performances but has a number of distinct features. There, Sanghyang has four chronological sections. The celestial nymphs Sulasih and Nilotama appear first. Minaka and Gudita dance second. Gagar Mayang and then Tunjung Beru come third. The last to dance are Gudita and Supraba. While Gudita performs twice, in the second and the final section, there are two masks of two further celestial nymphs, Took and Kentrut, who are not usually performed for unknown reasons. This might be simply because those two celestial nymphs are marginal in current Balinese mythologies, or because these two spirits refuse to descend for lack of worshippers. Some people suspect that it could also be because, to the Balinese ear, the names do not sound as beautiful as the other seven. Beauty in its many forms is very important to the Balinese view of life. The masks used in this village temple are considered so holy they can never be photographed or even looked at outside the moment of performance.

Although there are always common patterns of procedure, movement, repetition and choreography that identify the type of each Sanghyang performance, unpredictable actions often occur. Dancers in trance have been known to suddenly run away from the ceremony and get lost among the trees and bushes, pursued by villagers in the dark before any harm can come to them. During the pig Sanghyang, villagers in trance sometimes roll around in the mud and eat any rubbish that they find. In the monkey Sanghyang, dancers often climb up trees and hang from branches; a dancer in trance has been known to tear apart a live chicken and eat the stomach still raw. The unpredictable is a common and important part of the whole event. In a way, it can be argued that this unpredictability is essential to the communal understanding of the event as real trance, during which actual possession occurs; in this state of consciousness, the performers no longer have control of their own actions.

Another ceremony for the observing villagers is *ancangan druwene*, dedicated after the climax of the performance. When the fire embers have been scattered away and the dancing ground has become dim, some people begin to clear the ground of ashes, while the rest expect the entranced Sanghyang to speak and give instructions as to how the villagers can improve prosperity or cure the problem for which the performance was enacted. Otherwise, a small selected number of people often approach the entranced Sanghyang to pay homage to them and respectfully raise questions regarding current issues and problems of the local community. Through this question-and-answer encounter between the Sanghyang and the village representatives, the entire village population would deduce what action to take to restore and improve people's welfare.

To conclude the dance, the priest sprinkles holy water on the dancers to

bring them back to consciousness. He then sprinkles the water on the entire congregation, accompanied by the song of Sekar Jepun that ends the trance:

<i>Sekar jepun, Angrek lan ratna medori putih</i>	Frangipani, orchid and white Medori flowers
<i>Teleng petak tunjung beru</i>	White Teleng flowers and a blue lotus
<i>Dedari makarya tirta</i>	The celestial nymph creates holy water
<i>Tirta hening mawadah sibuh Kencana manis</i>	Golden sweet pitcher of pure holy water
<i>Tirta empul sudhamala</i>	Holy water of natural springs to clean impurity
<i>Dong siratin ragane tirta</i>	Please sprinkle it on us

The Sanghyang's assigned assistants lift the dancers up from the ground and lay their heads on their laps. When the dancers regain normal consciousness, the headdress is taken off first and returned to a holy storage place, always separate from the rest of the dance costume.

Terms that refer to the concluding session are *ngalinggihang* (placing) and *ngaluhur* (ascending or departure). Incantation and offerings are dedicated to make dancers regain consciousness. The community implements the oracles or suggestions that the entranced Sanghyang dancers conveyed during the show in the hope of reinforcing safety, welfare and increasing prosperity.

These are the general rules, systems and structures behind all Sanghyang performances. However, each performance of a specific Sanghyang has many elements that give it unique character, adding to our fuller understanding. A performance of Sanghyang deling, puppet Sanghyang, observed in May 1994 in a mountain village of Kintamani, Kayu Kapas, in the north of Bali, gives fascinating insights into this extraordinary form of performance. The four-part general structure was followed, as in most other types of Sanghyang, as already described.

For several weeks before the ceremony the two young girls (chosen by the priest) who are to perform the dance were confined to live in the temple, assisting the priest in cleaning and looking after everything within the temple area. The initiation of the performance, such as solemnising/worshipping (*penyungsungan*), invoking (*nedunang*), reporting (*matur piuning*) and waking up (*nangiang*) a particular spirit had begun from the priest's decision and consequent directions, based on guidance that the priest received from private communication with the spirits. The priest then told villagers to make offerings and to memorise the songs and music. He

also told them to clean the surrounding area and the temple, which takes several days to complete. On a particular transitional day of three-day week, five-day week and seven-day week of the Balinese calendar, the priest directs the villagers to dress the dancers, to prepare the gamelan music and to display the offerings so that he, the priest, dressed in white robes, can dedicate the offerings to the supreme God and the other celestial gods and goddesses and spirits dwelling in that small mountain temple. Adoring, glorifying and praising gods and spirits with mantra and hymn chorus are essential prerequisites to perform Sanghyang.

In the early evening (around 6:00 p.m.) the dancers, two small girls aged 9 and 11, are dressed in one corner of the temple. They are bound tightly in a white cloth and then decorative, golden garments are fitted on top. They wear a full-length green sarong on the bottom half of their bodies and a decorative apron, *lamak*, in red and gold on the top. They also wear a highly decorated neckband, *bapang*, in the same colours. Long, white or yellow scarves made of net that can be held up like wings are attached to the body of the costume. The costume is finished with sequined wrist and arm bands, *gelangkana*. Both girls wear bright-red lipstick. Whilst the girls are dressed, life goes on in a relaxed way elsewhere around the temple as adults and children come and go. About an hour later the girls and the villagers all process down a narrow, winding country lane to a small temple where the ceremony will take place. It is now dark and oil lamps are lit around the ceremonial area. The temple is very basic with a crude altar area. Otherwise, there is only bare ground, indicating that the community living in the village is poor.

On this evening, the ceremony solemnisation is intensified by the simultaneous praying of all participants in order to secure God's blessing, culminating in the priest sprinkling holy water, *tirta*, three times on every single participant, having them drink three drops of *tirta* three times and wetting each of their faces. The villagers conclude the praying by using water to stick several kernels of rice on their heads to be endowed with aesthetic sensibility, on the bottom part of their necks to be endowed with happiness and by swallowing several grains of rice to be endowed with a perfect life. Most villagers would simply do it, imitating their seniors, without reciting or knowing the appropriate puja, prayer. This preliminary ceremony concludes when both dancers kneel on either side of a string which is pulled tightly between two posts sitting about a metre and a half apart. A pair of deling figures made of palm leaf are attached to the string; previously, this had been brought down to the temple by the small procession and set up by assistants to the priest. As preparations continue, the priest gives offerings and prays at the altar.

The musician begins to play using a medium-sized hand drum as the lead instrument to control the dynamic and punctuation as necessary, bamboo

flutes to play the melody, cymbals to enrich the rhythm and knob chimes for keeping time. The music plays alternately with a chorus group who recite the chanting and songs to initiate and accompany the dance in harmony. Two of the male villagers manipulate the posts so that the two deling puppet figures now appear to dance. The chorus provides the song; the text imparts the underlying theme, as described earlier in the chapter, while the priest gives whispered narration and subtle dialogue in the form of a mantra.

From a puppetry perspective, this form could be considered as a basic, crude form of Balinese ritual string-puppet performance (Bali has no other string puppet traditions). In ancient Indian puppetry, for example, the one who holds and manipulates the string in the performance is known as *sutradhara*, which translates as 'artistic director' in contemporary Bali and Indonesia. In the performance of Sanghyang deling, string puppet, the *sutradhara* consists first of two men who are then replaced by the two girl dancers. By manipulating the string and sticks, they are responsible for holding and manipulating the spirit's journey down from the sky to the earth for their dance.

In Sanghyang deling, the spirit descends from the sky to the figure of deling, to the string/thread and finally to the dancers' body. After the dancers manipulate the string, exotic ritual mechanisms begin in order for the spirit deling to enter and manipulate the dancers so that their daily actions are transformed into extra daily movements in accordance with the demands of the spirit character temporarily dwelling inside them. While a theatre anthropologist might term the extra daily movement as acting technique, this Sanghyang trance does not employ the techniques of *natya darmi* or *loka darmi*, stylised or realistic acting. In the sense that the performer internalises an external impulse, the trance may be similar in some ways to highly stylised acting, but the trance process does not actively undergo a lengthy process of imitation, repetition and emulation of a given established form or character. There is no study of character, gesture or movement as the entranced dancer, with complete internal commitment, belief and devotion, is immediately ready to passively submit/surrender herself as a vehicle into which the spirit can descend.

In terms of the choreography, the composition of this Sanghyang deling may be divided into four parts:

- 1 a pair of puppet figures, deling, dance on the string;
- 2 two female dancers put on their headdresses and manipulate fans whilst they sway and dance;
- 3 the dancing deling figures dance, standing on the shoulders of men; and
- 4 the performers descend and dance by and through the flames.

The two fully costumed girls, who are as yet without headdress, calmly sit on either edge of the string with a special companion, usually an elder relative, sitting behind them. The duet dance of the flat puppets commences while the priest is sitting at the centre of the string, between the two girls, invoking the spirit, whilst the string is manipulated, making the puppets jump up and down and along the string moving towards each other. Along with the accompanying chanting and music, the dance of the puppets begins with a slow tempo and soon develops its dynamic and tempo towards the climax of the dance. Throughout this process the priest fans aromatic incense smoke into the faces of the two girls, which does not seem to cause any discomfort as they breathe in the scents. Contrary to some speculation, no narcotic substances are in the incense pot – only bark and herbs, dominated by sandalwood. It is sensual stimulation and not a chemically induced experience, as the evocative music and perfumed smoke add to the effect of the flickering oil light. After about ten minutes, the dancers themselves take hold of the sticks and continue to make the puppets dance, maintaining the manipulation of the sticks so that the spirit of *deling* may enter the girl dancers. The dancers close their eyes and eventually become weak and unsteady on their feet, understood by all as a visual clue to the beginning of a trance state. Their companions then help them to put on the headdresses as their own hand movements are slow and a little unfocused. Now, both dancers go into deeper trance and move as though in a dream as the headdresses complete the full *Legong* dance costume. It is as though the headdress actually completes the trance induction and acts as a psychological cue to commence the second stage of the ritual. The girls stand up and begin to dance holding their golden, decorated fans that their assistants have handed to them.

We can get a better sense and overall understanding of the dance through the lyrics of the song in which an underlying, shared knowledge exists that a *deling* is a beautiful legendary Balinese female figure who resembles images of celestial nymphs. The poetic images evoked by the lyrics create, for the villagers and dancers, a visual image of beauty and serenity. There is also specific choreographic direction and an indication of an intensifying emotional state:

<i>Dewi Ayu</i>	<b>Beautiful Angel</b>
<i>Dewi ayu dewi suci Ida lunga</i>	Beautiful holy angel who gently walks
<i>mangulangun</i>	around
<i>Mangungsi ke gunung sekar</i>	Heading towards the mountain flowers
<i>Tetamanan bagus dedara</i>	In the beautiful celestial park



<i>Mangulati sekar tunjung</i>	Seeking a lotus flower
<i>Tunjung emas tunjung kuning</i>	Golden lotus, yellow lotus
<i>Lelakon sami mangindang</i>	Walking is now flying
<i>Mangindang sisin telaga</i>	Flying over the pool of water
<i>Mangindangi I capung emas</i>	Complementing the golden dragonfly
<i>Mekadi kupu-kupu matarum</i>	Whilst butterflies dance alongside
<i>Metarum makepet mas dadua</i>	They dance with a pair of golden fans
<i>Manyaliog mauderan</i>	Sweeping around everywhere
<i>Tetanjeke manolih-nolih</i>	Sometimes perching and eyeing
<i>Manolih juru kidunge</i>	Glances at the singers
<i>Juru kidung sampun madampyak</i>	The chorus has flocked here and seated attentively
<i>Karsan ida nunas lungsuran sekar</i>	They have come to request the sight of beauty
<i>Picayang dewa picayang</i>	Please award it God
<i>Icenin juru kidunge</i>	Please award it to the chorus
<i>Dewa ayu, yat tiyat dewa ayu</i>	Hail beautiful, honourable nymph
<i>Mariki dewa masolah</i>	Please come here and dance
<i>Masolah magulu wangsul</i>	Dance and move your neck
<i>Gulu wangsul (2 ×)</i>	Move your neck
<i>Tetanjeke cara jawa manayog cara den bukit</i>	Make your Javanese steps and sway your hands in the northern Balinese way
<i>Inggekek-inggek yat tiyat ingkek-ingkek</i>	Strolling and strolling
<i>Kadi merake mangelo</i>	Strutting like a peacock
<i>Makeber ikute luwung</i>	Displaying its beautiful tail
<i>Ikut luwung (2 ×)</i>	Its tail so beautiful
<i>Mapontang mamata mirah makebyur</i>	Decorated with eyes like precious stones
<i>ebone miyik</i>	that radiate sweet scent
<i>Miyik nyangluh yat tiyat miyik nyangluh</i>	Fragrant sweet delicious aroma
<i>Gegandan gadung kasturi</i>	The scent of the Gadung flower
<i>Miyik nyangluh maimpugan</i>	Fragrant sweetness permeating the air
<i>Mahimpugan yat tiyat maimpugan</i>	Permeating the air, yes the air
<i>Seneng ratu ayu sayan edan mangigelin</i>	The Nymph dances wildly and passionately

The basic vocabulary of movements is made up of the swinging and swaying gestures, alternate foot steps and moving hands complemented by bending of the body to the right and left with closed eyes (closed rather than the rapidly darting, dancing eyes of later forms). Although the costume is now similar in many ways to that of the secular Legong dance, the vocabulary of movements and choreography is much simpler as the forerunner and a less sophisticated version of that contemporary Legong form. The original costume was much simpler and less ornate, but the wheel has turned full circle as the modern forms now influence the root from where it originated. This simple choreography, lack of special stage decoration, the bare-ground performance area and lack of formal audience serve to intensify the solemnity of the event, as does the complete spiritual commitment of all the local performers and participants. The gestures are unrefined and improvised throughout, in stark contrast to the exquisitely performed and painstakingly rehearsed secular Legong, now seen by many visitors to the island.

The dancing continues for 15 minutes before each dancer climbs up (eyes still closed and supported by their assistants) onto the shoulders of a man – often a relative. The girls look tiny and frail, standing, usually unsupported, high up on the shoulders of the men as they move around the courtyard. Still swaying back and forth, moving their fans with numerous repetitive gestures, keeping their eyes closed and occasionally arching their bodies backwards, both dancers remain in perfect balance while dancing in their newly elevated position. The extraordinary feat of balance is enabled by the trance state and is an important ritual part of the dance. Without possession, a contemporary Balinese dancer cannot emulate this and in the secularised, tourist-oriented versions of Sanghyang, the dancers sit on the shoulders and do not attempt to stand. In an interesting, informal workshop experiment at Middlesex University, England in 2002, led by Leon Rubin (one of the authors) and Professor of Psychology David Marks, this process was simulated with professional Western actors. The actors were asked to attempt the same feat in a normal rehearsal situation, with actresses trying to balance on actors' shoulders. Not surprisingly, they were unable to achieve this at all over a 20-minute period. Then simulated hypnosis was used, in which the acting company was asked to relax for a few minutes, without hypnotic induction, and then simulate a hypnotic state in order to try the challenge again. In other words, they were asked to act in the way they believed they would act if really hypnotised. The improvement was clear: 50 per cent of the participating pairs were able to quickly achieve momentary, basic balance within a few minutes of trying. In the final phase, genuine hypnotic induction was used and the feat tried again with considerable improvement and success for all but one of the pairs. The experiment, although informal and not rigorously enforced, suggested that a dissociated



*Figure 3.4* Sanghyang deling feats of balance

state of conscious allows a performer to achieve more than that individual's conscious mind would usually allow. However, even more interesting is the notion that relaxation and confidence, created in a simulated hypnotic state, is also effective. The implication for possible use in Western theatre training would be interesting to pursue. In terms of understanding the Sanghyang ritual, an apparently solid connection exists between complete belief and subjection to the trance state and the physical results achieved.

Dancing while balancing on the shoulders lasts about 15 minutes, after which both dancers step down to continue their dance on the ground, both facing the flames. The dancers of Sanghyang deling do not always dance completely through the fire, unlike the entranced performers in Sanghyang jaran, but each dancer dances in front of the flame of the burned coconut husks, which are gathered into two groups towards one side of the dancing site. They do not seem to be hurt or distressed as their small feet touch the burning husks.

The fire ritual signals that the ceremony will soon end as the final phase begins. The female dancers appear tired and kneel next to their special companions. The priest makes offerings and recites incantations in order to make the dancers regain full consciousness. The most discernable moment of transition from the state of trance to consciousness, during which time they open their eyes for the first time since the commencement of the trance state, is when the priest sprinkles holy water three times on and near both dancers. Their companions take off the headdresses and put them in a sacred place, while the dancers cup their hands in front of their bodies, the right hand over the left, over which the priest pours holy water for her to drink three times. The scene concludes with the last sprinkling of holy water over all the onlookers, after which both dancers retire to the dressing area to take off their performance costumes.

In an interview immediately after the ceremony, the girls seem happy and elated by the experience. They say that they do not remember any details after closing their eyes. They did not express any fear or disquiet about the events, but both were keen to point out that they like the honour attached to being chosen for the role. In this particular village, they had been chosen directly by the priest, probably for their susceptibility to trance, although in some villages there seems to be more of a family connection to the priest. In Bona village, where a semi-secularised form is frequently performed for visitors, dance skill is looked at in addition to other factors. Here, however, the priest and girls were insistent that there had never been any training or rehearsal and that all the dance was created by the possessing spirit. The dancers have to be replaced often as they are no longer allowed to dance once their first menstruation occurs.

In looking at Sanghyang deling alongside the other forms of Balinese trance, such as Sutri or another form of Sanghyang or even the later dance forms of Sanghyang legong and the secular Legong dance, we can see the historical and interrelated influences at work in the continuity and changes of Balinese female dance. The Sanghyang dedari appears to be the origin of Sanghyang legong, which in turn is the origin of the secular Legong dance and a number of other contemporary Balinese dances. The major difference is actually concerning the eye movements that are emphasised in



*Figure 3.5* Sanghyang penyalin ceremony

contemporary forms of Balinese dance, as opposed to the closed eyes of all the sacred trance forms. The eyes are very important for expressing character, but in the trance forms the detail is contained within the movements and narrative songs. As in many forms of meditation across Asia, the purpose of closing the eyes, beside concentration, is to activate the third eye, which

suggests more connection towards the invisible upper world rather than the terrestrial world. In addition, aesthetic considerations are minor during trance performances as the focus is on spiritual matters in relation to the descending spirits. These are the main differences between the original source trance forms and the descendent forms.

In the most recently developed form of Sanghyang legong, the cultural entertainment dance, the rapid, darting eye movements or 'eye flicking' as it is often described, is deliberate and exquisite, carefully choreographed and well rehearsed in accordance with the accompanying music, especially the drum patterns and the accentuated beat of the kempur and gong chimes. Here, the dancer is required to show the beauty of her eyes, and the accuracy of the eye movements demonstrates her skill; blinking and closing of eyes are frowned upon. In Western traditions, the eyes are not usually important for dance, but in acting for camera, they are a key to understanding emotion and sometimes character.

The coded body posture that shapes the dancer's body like a sculpture is divided into right and left positions that are also extensively used and, indeed, exaggerated in Legong. The simple hand gestures and footsteps of the sacred Sanghyang dance are highly developed into delicate and controlled movements and gestures in the secular Legong dance and a number of other contemporary Balinese dance forms. The basis for the modern-day Legong dance costume is the basic, minimally decorated costume traditionally used by the Sanghyang trance (it can be seen in a number of books, paintings and other documents in museums throughout the island), which has now been highly developed into a colourful and ornate costume. Today, most Legong dancers are chosen for looks and ability rather than for the traditional reasons outlined earlier.

Some gamelan music repertoires accompanying Legong dance are patterned from the melody of Sanghyang song. For example, the Sanghyang song 'Beautiful Angel', translated earlier in this chapter, is now played extensively in gamelan orchestras with various patterns of drumming and other percussive embellishments to accompany the Legong dance. Similarly, the gamelan music repertoire accompanying the Telek masked dance are taken from and patterned after the melody of another Sanghyang song.

Legong, Telek and other newer forms have developed rapidly since the creation of ASTI (Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia, Indonesian Academy of Dance), now known as ISI (Institut Seni Indonesia Denpasar, Balinese Academy of Arts), and SMKI (Sekolah Menengah Kesenian Indonesia, High School for Performing Arts) in the 1970s and have now almost replaced Sanghyang as a form, except for rare ritual contexts when the emphasis is still on divine devotion. The main exception is in the village of Bona where a version of Sanghyang dedari is performed for religious and tourist

purposes. However, mixed opinions exist as to the authenticity of these performances as full, glamorous Legong costumes are worn and the performances are shortened to fit with tourist expectations. Some villages, though, are simply able to distinguish between performances when the spirits do descend and those when they do not. They are able to accept parallel use of the same form in and out of sacred context and see no conflict, while others bemoan the secularisation process and see it as a serious threat to tradition. This question applies to other forms of trance performance in Bali. With an increase in tourism to Bali, non-sacred and largely faked versions of trance have sprung up and are performed regularly for visitors in several performance sites in addition to Bona, especially in south part of Bali, such as Ubud, Kuta, Sanur and Nusa Dua. Before the Kuta bomb blast, these largely faked versions of trance were performed several times a week. They tended to combine the bright costumes and the sophisticated vocabulary of movements of Legong, for example, with the solemn manner of a sacred version, creating a hybrid form, thereby making three forms: sacred, secular and fake-sacred. The strong face make-up imitates the secular Legong dance and the choreography has been rearranged and transformed from the original improvised choreography into organised, more elaborate choreography suitable for a paying audience. Since the secular versions are performed more frequently than the sacred ones, in some places, such as Bona, the same dancers are used for all three versions. This has had a significant impact over the pure version; the ritual performance of Sanghyang legong at Ketewel recently concluded with the currently popular Legong kraton dance, in the same temple area and by the same dancers and musicians. Indeed, current performances of sacred Sanghyang deling in Kintamani, Sanghyang dedari in Camengaon and Bona, and the ritual Sanghyang legong at Ketewel have all adopted the costume from the secular Legong dance. The dance tends to be choreographed as though for a proscenium stage, as for the tourist performances, although the stage in the temple is still an arena and the audiences fill all 75 per cent of the stage perimeter. In other words, the audience occupies three sides of the stage, but the dancers face in only one direction.

Viewed from the acting technique perspective, one development of interest appears in the newer, tourist versions: the techniques of using sense memory and emotional recall do not apply here because there can, of course, be no experience of being an angel or celestial nymph. Though the women may have performed the Sanghyang dances and are now asked to perform the fake one, they do not remember what they did as they were in a trance, so consequently they can express little of the emotion they felt while in a trance. The Sanghyang trance is an emotional experience with heightened sensations and feelings that are transmitted by the performer to



the onlookers. This is unusual in Balinese and most Asian performance forms. The techniques of imitation, emulation and internalising the external form, image or character into the dancer's internal system (as observed in most oriental stylistic acting forms) dominates. The women must have observed other dancers to know what to do and how to act. Their task now is to translate that knowledge into a convincing performance, in the same way a mask becomes a dancer's face. Therefore, the acting techniques of the sacred and fake forms of the performances are quite different. In the sacred form, the dancer totally submits herself and, consequently, forgets what her body has done, while in the second form, she is deliberately moulding her body into what is expected of her.

As Sanghyang has developed and changed, with additional choreographic components and a variety of embellishments, into several dances, viewing it from the diachronic perspective is important. It can be seen as having spawned three forms of Balinese female dance. In addition, the Sanghyang musical component has developed into one Kecak chorus, mime and dance, with all the theatrical elements of plot, theme, male and female characters, song and speech. This therefore connects the trance Sanghyang *dedari* at Camengaoon and Bona or the trance Sanghyang *deling* in Kintamani to that of the ceremonial Sanghyang *legong* at Ketewel. In turn, it is possible to connect it to the contemporary secular *Legong* dance found throughout the island and to the tourist performances of the Kecak choir. From the sacred Sanghyang *dedari*, *deling*, *sutri* and the ceremonial Sanghyang *legong*, to the secular *Legong* dance, these genres still share remarkable similarities, although the newer forms have become increasingly artistically sophisticated in terms of their movements, choreography, costumes and coded body gestures. Sanghyang *dedari* and Sanghyang *deling* are obviously perceived as the original form of Sanghyang *legong*, which eventually developed into the newer *Legong* dance. The male Kecak chanting, one musical component of Sanghyang *dedari*, has been rearranged to accompany the Kecak dance-drama, drawing its story from the Ramayana epic; Kecak is now the only Balinese dance-drama accompanied fully by vocal music by between 60 and 150 male chanters.

In each of the above developing stages, the following eight divergent elements are continually modified; noticing the different ways that these elements are incorporated into each genre is the key to understanding the artistic creativity within each performance form. These elements, then, are a summary of factors that an observer needs to identify in order to understand what type and form of performance is taking place:

- 1 Costumes: headdress, mask, necklace, shoulder cover, bracelet, shirt, gold painted belt, side strap and make-up. The earlier Sanghyang



performances use a minimum of these items and the more contemporary forms employ all of them in a highly decorative form. In the horse Sanghyang, the mask-making goes through the process of *melaspas* (purification), *pasupati* (spiritual possession) and *majaya-jaya* (celebration).

- 2 Movement: the vocabulary of movement directly identifies the type of descending spirit. The Sanghyang deling, Sanghyang dedari and Sutri use gentle and narrow footsteps, complemented by complex and rich hand movements and graceful body gestures and sometimes *tutup dada*, chest bends, and *lamak*, front steps.

Character is manifested through soft facial movements, elegant chin and neck movements representing the manifestation of nymph spirits. The horse Sanghyang jaran, on the other hand, demands extremely large steps and coarse action. Small rapid steps, kicking, frequent hopping and jumping, strong foot movement and body gestures reinforce the character, without moving the hands, as the dancer is grasping and manipulating the figure of a fabricated horse. In the first stage, as the dancer starts entering a trance, he looks tired, trembles, closes his eyes and suddenly makes extreme movements and collapses, crying. The body goes rigid and then slumps, but the dancer immediately resists anyone trying to touch his body.

- 3 Gender: diction and or patterns of speech and movement are different according whether they are associated with male or female characters. A series of gestures and poses for male characters include: standing positions with both knees bent, feet turned out, toes flexed up, with a wide stance; strong, large and staccato gestures; long strides, high lifting of the foot, sudden and less flowing movements and gestures than female characters. The voice for the male character is loud, fast, low in pitch and less melodic than the female. By contrast, the female character employs almost the opposite series of movements, tones of voice and poses. She is required to stand with her knees close together (to demonstrate modesty), in a narrow stance, with fingertips turning in. The delicate movement of hands is especially important and they must gracefully sculpt the air in the manner typical of a refined character. She has to move gently and more flowingly, in a smaller amount of space, with grace and calm strength and has to take more grounded and shorter footsteps than the male character does. Her voice must be melodic, high in pitch and sweet.
- 4 Musical/vocal accompaniment: the female chorus sings Kidung and there are various songs containing poetic lyrics. The male chorus uses seven layers of *chak* interlocking chants.
- 5 Stage/arena/performance sites: the choreographic arrangements

- observe and suit either the arena or proscenium-type stage. The sacred Sanghyang trance is typically performed in the innermost courtyard of the temple, the ceremonial show in the second courtyard, and the secular one can be performed anywhere except in the innermost temple.
- 6 Apparatus: types of offerings and performance properties and accessories. Secular performance has few rules, but in sacred trance performance all objects are minimal and always constructed of natural materials. Offerings vary according to the circumstance.
  - 7 Story or narrative: this is important and the form determines whether the dances are ritual or dramatic; local practices are also distinctive. For example, at Sedang and Jangu village, no water or holy water may touch the dancer's body, otherwise the dancer may be burned or the trance may not be successful. Secular performances sometimes add narrative complexities such as the extract from the Ramayana told in contemporary Kecak performance.
  - 8 Performers and participants/audience: Sanghyang dancers must be ritually purified through a typical ceremony called *mawinten*. In the period leading up to the performance, the dancers may have to follow strict codes of good behaviour. In sacred performances, the audience is usually local villagers only, although outsiders are not banned. There may be rules concerning the banning of cameras and recording devices, such as during the Sanghyang legong performances in Ketewel.

Although barely surviving in Bali today, Sanghyang has left behind a rich legacy of descendent forms. It may not be long before that original form becomes extinct. Chapter 4 deals with the ancient tradition that is in many ways the opposite of Sanghyang. Gambuh, unlike Sanghyang, focuses on technique and the aesthetics of performance. Unlike Sanghyang, it deals specifically with narrative and involves a whole company of performers who concentrate on demonstrating carefully learnt gestures and movements within a tightly structured form. Unlike Sanghyang, it has a protected status and elevated position within religious and performance traditions.

## 4 Gambuh classical performance

Gambuh is the oldest continuously performed dance-drama form in Bali. It is a surviving, ancient court form that belongs to the bebalı semi-sacred tradition. With a traceable history of at least four hundred years it has roots in the Majapahit Empire. A grand and complex performance, its gestures and music are firmly rooted in what is termed the Balinese classical style. The style is elevated and regal, suggestive of its court origins. Generally agreed to be the source of many later classical forms such as Topeng and Legong, it is also still a key source and influence on modern Balinese choreographers looking for a musical structure and design springboard for their work. In this sense, it is the bridge between the classical past and present within Balinese performance in general. It is as much a source to Balinese performance genres as Shakespearian plays are to English-speaking drama. It can be argued that Shakespeare gave us much of the language still current in English-language drama, and Gambuh gave to Balinese performance a complete language of body movement. In Gambuh, it is movement, gesture and structure that act as key sources. In each case, one dominating influence can be traced through centuries of work and is still important today.

In Balinese thinking, innovation is usually a positive development but almost always that same innovation will have clearly understood roots and connections. New forms develop and evolve continually in Bali, but they grow out as branches, rather than exist as completely separate species. Performance is organic and is viewed as part of something greater, in a religious, but also performance, sense. The linkage is through training, tradition, religious practice and shared understandings of purpose; performance is intricately entwined with the past.

Gambuh is often described as the first ancestor of the Balinese dance-drama and has been providing inspiration and various aesthetic concepts and artistic methods that helped establish many succeeding genres. The story, dance costumes, headdress, the theatrical way of featuring the essence of

dramatic characters rather than the individual character itself, and the stylistic form of dance and speech diction of Gambuh are also employed in descending genres such as Topeng masked theatre, Arja opera sung dance-drama, Prembon comedic drama in a style similar in many ways to Commedia dell'arte, and Sendratari narrated dance-drama, Calonarang mystical/magical theatre, and many new dance creations. Topeng masked theatre also employs the dance costume of Gambuh, from the headdress to the footwear. For example, by only adding the masks to match the dramatic characters of another narrative source, Babad, the Gambuh dancers in one village, Batuan, can perform Topeng dance-drama. An individual dancer/performer might begin a career with Gambuh and then move on through the years to a series of other forms of performance that all relate in one way or another directly to the original source form of Gambuh. In learning each new form, the performer's skills are added to and techniques expanded and adapted.

Without the mask, the narrative repertoire enacted in Gambuh performance, the romance of the Panji Cycle, is also demonstrated in the later form of Arja sung dance-drama, replacing the speech diction, mostly spoken in Gambuh, into partly sung and partly spoken sequences. In Calonarang dance-drama, many folk – and witch-like characters complement the Gambuh dance style, costumes and characterisation to enact stories that feature black magic, sickness and death. In effect, these scenes containing witches, corpses and an array of folk characters mostly distinguish Calonarang from the Gambuh dance-drama. The most recently created form and the most spectacular dance-drama, Sendratari, also employs and develops music repertoires, dance style and characterisations from Gambuh. By modifying the Gambuh costumes and choreography, changing the story, and assigning one person to render all the vocal arts, speech diction and dialogue, Sendratari appears as a distinctive genre, in which all dancers are only miming the acting and dance movement, without delivering any dialogue or narration.

It is significant that contemporary Balinese choreographers working on new compositions still often turn to Gambuh as a major source for their work. Many of the artistic elements of Gambuh, especially its highly stylistic acting and dance style, are still prevalent and pervasive in various recent dance compositions, including the popular tourist Barong and Rangda dance-drama.

The vocabularies of movements from Gambuh, that can be seen in many succeeding genres previously mentioned, includes the movements of eyes, head, neck, hands, fingers and feet. The dramatic and aesthetic concepts of these movements are still well maintained in the other genres. The sharp flicking of eyes points to the direction, object or person of focus, staring



Figure 4.1 Gambuh male performers and orchestra

eyes indicates curiosity, glancing eyes suggests madness, various mudra (gestures derived from classical Indian dance terminology) hand gestures and finger positions indicate the type of character and the motive for action; various foot movements of twisting, lifting, stepping sideways and back and forth and sudden jumps/strides for cueing the musicians are all derived from Gambuh. Some dance patterns/cadences composed by combining two to five different movements in Gambuh can very frequently be identified in the descending genres. Those patterns include, among many others, *ulap-ulap* (eyeing pattern), which suggests investigation of an object or person and are repeated often throughout the performance; touching and raising a robe indicates readiness to leave; the circular and evasive kissing pattern signifies a love scene; the middle finger moving towards the head-dress (as it seems to the outside observer) suggests touching of the third eye. Specific positions vary according to the gender of the performer; for example, a male kneels with only one knee resting on the ground whereas a female kneels with both knees touching the ground.

In addition, *tangkep* (facial expression) and the standard coded body postures in almost all forms of performance are also derived from Gambuh dance-drama. These coded body positions are also known as *agem*, basic position; left or right (rarely middle) position is indicated by where the body's weight is directed. The unified balance is not established by the symmetrical lines or middle and equal positions, but by composing the

imbalance and balance, complementing the strong limb with the soft limb, and combining the straight lines and tilted lines or equilibrium and asymmetry. Thus, dynamic balance is more prevalent and preferred than stable balance. This concept of dynamic balance is central to understanding Balinese performance in general. It relates philosophically to the concepts outlined in Chapter 1 and connects to the symbol of the swastika, itself an illustration of this balance. Like the swastika, the movement is circular and continual, like a wheel turning, as one-sided balance is corrected by a movement to the opposite side and so on for eternity. For example, in the right position, the body weight is allotted to the right foot that makes it strong, while the left is soft and relaxed. When the entire body belongs in effect to the back right corner, the facial focus must be directed towards the front left corner. The left ear is now higher than the right one, because of the rightward slanted body, so the right elbow must be brought up, equal to the height of the left ear. Since this right position makes the right elbow and foot strong, the softer and more relaxed left hand and foot must do or initiate the elaborating movements, whether twisting, lifting, jumping, jerking or walking. All applies equally in reverse when the weight is on the other side. Balinese performance gives the impression of continual movement in the hands, eyes, feet, head or torso. This makes it significantly different from some other classical dance forms, also derived from Indian classical dance, in South East Asia. The Thai, male, masked dance known as Khon, for example, appears slower, stiller and more grounded; in that form, points of balance are often found and momentarily held.

To begin the standard coded body postures derived from Gambuh, the abdominal area is held in until the chest is pulled up and the torso slightly arches back. In a typical standing position, thighs and feet turn out from as little as 45 degrees for female characters to as wide as 170 degrees for male characters. The knees bend down unsymmetrically so that only one foot fully supports the body weight, which is slightly tilted to either right or left. The toes flex upward, especially those of the foot that stays in front of the other or lifts up from the floor. Derived from Gambuh, female characters have a narrower stance and make a shorter stride, moving more slowly, gently and subtly than the male characters, who have a wider stance and a longer stride with strong accentuated and less flowing gestures. Interestingly, though, dancers of either gender can learn to play male or female roles. Often male teachers instruct female characters in many Balinese dance and dance-drama forms.

Several local terms for characterisation that overlap one another include *tokoh* (personality) that dramatically relates to the gender of the character; *watak* (profile) that practically relates to the acting style of the character; and *peran* (role) that theatrically relates to a character's function in a genre,

or simply *karakter* that relates to the allies or coalition of their characters. Five characterisations exist, based on gender, type, genre, affiliation/alliance and social status.

Characterisation from the perspective of gender lays a primary emphasis on the story or dramatic text, so that all characters in the play first are identified based on their gender: male, female or androgynous. In Gambuh, this gender perspective helps a dancer to define the standard voice into three broad divisions: low voice identifies male characters; medium voice identifies androgynous characters; and high voice identifies female characters. The narrative source, the *Panji/Malat* poem that tells the gender of each dramatic character, helps the dancer to further elaborate this division in greater detail. A distinctive attribute and stratified position of each dramatic character determines the appropriate languages in accordance with the three hierarchical linguistic manners/levels: high, middle and low. The *Panji/Malat* poem also gives a fixed phrase of verse or song that is appropriate to accompany each character and mentions a specific weapon and vehicle that should be used by and associated with a specific character.

Characterisation from the perspective of type or acting style puts most emphasis on the vocabulary of the performers' movements, gestures and coded body positions. In a dance-drama genre such as Gambuh, this perspective belongs to, and is used by, the practitioners to communicate among themselves, i.e. the actors, actresses and the instructor. Consequently, these artists develop several terms for coded body gestures or movements such as *gagah* (tough in a male way), *lemuh* (gentle), *sengap* (a mixture of rushed and tense), or *ngenduk* (soft, associated with a certain character). This type-based character list includes: *keras* (strong) or *kasar* (harsh) – the knight Kebo Angun-angun or Prabangsa; *manis* (sweet) or *halus* (soft) – prince Panji or princess Putri; *serem* (frightening or magical) – the demon Denawa or the witch Raksasa; and *banyol* (farce) or *kocak* (loose or shaky) – the comic servants/courtiers Demang or Tumenggung.

Characterisation from a genre perspective puts great emphasis on the form or genre of the performance. Consequently, each genre such as Gambuh, Topeng and Arja has its major distinctive stock characters. For example, in the genre of Arja opera, the stock scene characters include Condong the maid servant, Galuh the princess, Desak/Made Rai the coquette servants, Limbur the queen, Liku the coquette princess, Punta and Wijil the male paired servants, Mantri Manis the sweet prince, and the Mantri Buduh the crazy prodigal prince. This also allows us to list cogent stock scene characters of other genres. In all types of Wayang, the stock characters include a group of comic servants (*panasar*), male and female folk characters (*panjak*), soldiers/fighters (*balayuda*), a sage or priest (*rsi*), a king (*raja*) and a queen (*ratu*), a prince (*putra*) and a princess (*putri*), one

or several prime ministers (*patih*), a few comic courtiers such as Dusasana (*raja buduh*) and monsters (*raksasa*) or demonic characters (*detya*) who are both male and female. The audience appreciates and often expects improvisational interpretation of each stock character. For example, the comic servants/courtiers typically present farcical interludes or social commentaries. A sage is expected to reinforce moral order; a folk character presents hegemonic criticism, etc.

Characterisation connected to alliance emphasises a group of human or non-human characters. All characters, therefore, are grouped according to their coalition or affiliation in Balinese performance as a whole. The affiliation-based characterisation of Wayang Parwa, for example, may be divided into three sub-groups: celestial beings, human beings and demonic beings. The human beings may be further divided into good and bad characters. In her book *Dancing Shadows of Bali*, Angela Hobart (1987: 46–56) divides Wayang characters into six divisions: heavenly beings, those of high caste, ogres, mythical creatures, servants and scenic figures. Each group has a set hierarchical and moral order, representing an eternal moral law. Since all puppets are analogues to living creatures, mythical figures and trees may also be categorised as characters. Consequently, another way to understand the stock characters is by looking at them in subgroups. All the following have many subgroups: gods and goddesses, titans, angels, heavenly priests, mythical figures, human beings, animals, birds, demonic beings, trees and several scenic figures.

Social status divisions also form characterisation, which is seen in every genre. Such status-based characters include a king (*raja*) and a queen (*ratu*), a sage or priest (*rsi*), a prince (*putra*) and a princess (*putri*), prime ministers (*patih*), servants (*panasar*), folk characters (*panjak*) and soldiers/fighters (*balayuda*).

The ultimate feature in the performance of Gambuh is character. Unlike in the West, dramatic characters only need a motivation as the subtext springboard to perform their action without the need for complex, psychological detail. In Gambuh, each character is associated with several distinctive visual, audio and verbal elements to be able to perform: music, with various repertoires and instruments; dance, with stylistic body gestures; vocabulary of movements and narrative devices containing speech, diction and songs. The further subdivisions include various costumes and other related theatrical components, selected and integrated to build a certain character as the ultimate objective. Figure 4.2 visualises several subcomponents that are integrated to build a further, larger component until a given character is fully built.

Gambuh performers are typically trained in a fairly large group at ISI (Institut Seni Indonesia Denpasar, Indonesian Arts Institute) in Bali. The



village instructor normally teaches the individual, in addition to teaching in small groups of two to ten students. However, practising alone is not uncommon. Mastering the choreography and the vocabulary of movements is generally considered easier than mastering the song, speech and diction required for Gambuh. Some performers are completely trained in villages,

Gambuh Stock (rather than play-based) Character	<i>Condong</i> 'lady in waiting'	Dance structure	1 Introduction, termed as <i>papeson</i> 'entrance'	Costumes	Headdress	
	<i>Kakan-Kakan</i> 'female attendants'		2 Main part, called <i>pangawak</i> (body), accompanies some characters and is often repeated or has more than one version		Kris dagger	
			<i>Putri</i> 'princess'		3 Elaboration, known as <i>pangecet</i> (embellishment)	Neck dress
					<i>Arya</i> 'courtiers'	4 Acceleration, termed as <i>pangrangrang</i> (strutting) or <i>pangelik</i> (culmination)
	<i>Panji</i> 'prince'		5 Resolution, termed as <i>pakaad</i> (dismissing)			Shirt
		<i>Turas</i> 'servant'	Music repertoire			1 Introduction, termed as <i>papeson</i> (entrance)
	2 Main part, called <i>pangawak</i> (body) or <i>pangadeng</i> (slowness) accompanies some characters and is often repeated or has more than one version					Bracelets
	<i>Demang</i> 'older court officer'				1 Trompong, longest instrument	
		2 Kendang, drums				
		3 Kempur, knob chime				

Figure 4.2 Gambuh

				Kajar, time keeper
	<i>Tumenggung</i> 'younger court officer'			Gender rambat
	<i>Prabu</i> 'king of' Jenggala		3 Elaboration, known as <i>pangecet</i> (embellishment)	Pemade
	<i>Penasar Kelihan</i> 'older servant'		4 Acceleration, termed as <i>pangelik</i> (culmination) to accompany the <i>pangrangrang</i> (strutting) part of the dance	Panyacah
	<i>Penasar Cenic</i> 'younger servant'		5 Resolution, termed as <i>pakaad</i> (dismiss)	Calung
	<i>Patih</i> 'prime minister of' Jenggala, Kebo Angun-Angun		1 Speech/language type	Jegog
			2 Diction: tempo, dynamic, harmony	Klentong
			3 Song and sung lines/passage	Gentorag, bell cluster
			4 Rhetoric: low, high and dramatic style: ranging from extremely humble to pompous	Suling, flutes
			5 Mystical language/Vocal cues	Rebab, lire
	Other characters according to the story being enacted	<b>Narrative vocal</b>		<b>Dramatic devices</b>
				Weapon
				Torches
				Vehicles
				Letter, fan, scarf
				Props/ Accessories

Figure 4.2 continued

as in the past, although these days the two training institutes in Bali, SMKI (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan Indonesia, high school for performing arts) and ISI, are increasingly taking on that role for Gambuh and most other forms.

The training procedure's duration, quality, accuracy and the intensity of rehearsal vary, but the teaching method is similar. Following the instructor's

direction, a beginner typically trains for the first time on an auspicious day, preceded by a ritual ceremony in order to invoke divine guidance. The rehearsal always begins with, and focuses on, one specific character out of more than a dozen existing stock characters. However, unlike a Western classical acting rehearsal, in which an actor focuses on one identified character, such as Hamlet or Ophelia, and usually begins with the specific language used by the playwright, an actor of Gambuh would focus on the essence of a dramatic character, such as a prince or female servant, that is appropriate to any story that will be performed. Consequently, the idealised body shape, size and appearance of the beginners determines what character they are suitable for and what role they have to master. Someone short and fat will never be allowed to play the prince!

In Gambuh dance-drama, as in most performance arts in Bali, dancers are cast for a specific dramatic character based mainly on their looks and physique, although, of course, other aspects are considered, such as talent and physical skills. Casting in this way means that the performer will generally stay with that genre of character for the rest of their training and work. However, as the training moves forward, if it becomes evident that the performer does not have the ability/skill for the assigned character, the instructor will switch the student to another character, based on his growing knowledge of the student's abilities. The main aspects to consider when training and casting are:

- the body posture of the dancer;
- the face of the dancer;
- the typical voice associated with a certain character;
- the maturity or the degree of skill;
- the artistic experience achieved;
- the personality and profile of the dancer.

The general teaching method that every instructor commonly uses includes (in order): imitation, repetition, emulation, sophistication and perfection. By imitation the instructor provides an example for each movement or each aesthetic component with a distinctive artistic method for a student to imitate. The student may do this through mirroring, puppeting technique (the instructor manipulates the student like a puppet) and/or repeating after the instructor. Verbal directions always accompany the entire process. An instructor usually employs mirroring to teach a movement by providing a specific sequence of movements for the student to copy. While mirroring is done facing the student without touching, puppeting is practised when the instructor needs to mould, hold and manipulate the student's hands, fingers, elbows or other body parts, and the instructor stands behind the

student. This puppeting technique is a key element in the training process as the instructor tries to teach the student muscle memory. The ability to feel and remember an exact position of a particular limb is at the heart of the physical training. It is not unusual for the instructor to lightly kick the students' feet, physically bend their knees out towards the side or the front, or push their bodies down while lifting their elbows high in order to create a correct body posture or movement correctly. Through these methods, the instructor can introduce, explain and analyse the vocabulary of movement for the students. It is only in recent years that actual mirrors have been used occasionally, borrowing the technique from Western dance training. The Balinese system is based on complete trust in the instructor to be a mirror and puppeteer. Working from behind the student and manipulating the body and muscles in a very precise way to create body memory could well be useful for some aspects of actor/dancer training in the West.

The instructor always uses the repeating-after method to teach speech diction and song. After the instructor recites a lyric or line of dialogue, the beginner repeats it. The students would typically have to listen to and watch repeatedly every single piece of movement or line. Through this repetition a beginner starts to internalise and learn the subjects one after another. The learning process of the vocabulary of movements for one character would typically take from six to ten months, while the process for learning speech diction is very much dependent on the student's talent – it may take as little as three months or up to more than a year. The local term for diction is *seni suara*, or *ucapan*. Since Gambuh is a form of well-known traditional theatre, people throughout the island are always familiar with the stylistic diction of each character. Consequently, the instructor does not need to tell students which diction belongs to what character or which character speaks quickly or slowly; they have had knowledge of these aspects since childhood. What they need to learn is how to get there; that is, how to train the voice and what method to use in order to master a specific type of speech diction. At this stage, the student begins to internalise enough of the basic body posture, movement and speech diction in order to enact a dramatic character; later the student may explore in more depth and experiment with the character as technical skills mature and develop.

To approach the composition, instructors mostly employ the Structure, Analysis and Synthesis method, unknown theoretically but practised instinctively and traditionally by most instructors. This method of training prompts the instructor to first show and explain the whole structure, the forms and supporting elements of a composition. It is considered very important for the beginner to first have a mental understanding of the whole composition, although the beginner cannot physically begin from the whole structure. Students can only physically begin little by little from the smallest integrated



*Figure 4.3* Gambuh performer

elements. Consequently, the instructor has to analyse, break down and separate the whole composition into parts, from parts into units, from units into sections, then finally into smallest movement, phrase or line. The beginner starts with this smallest movement/line via imitation, repetition, emulation, sophistication, modification and finally perfection (as described earlier), during which the integrated elements are assembled, synchronised or synthesised accordingly.

The following description is based on one case study, a typical ceremonial performance held on 6 December 2004 from 9:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. in Singakerta village, Ubud district, Gianyar regency.

A Gambuh performance is a co-operative venture organised by a team. One person acts as co-ordinator and issues a document to all concerned once the date of performance is finally decided, according to calendar and practical demands. In particular, the costume team need to know the exact details well in advance. The notification lists cast, musicians, time of performance, rehearsal arrangements and team leaders for each section of responsibility. From this point on the work begins.

A partial rehearsal, in which one or more dancers practise a certain part of the dance-drama independently without engaging the entire group members is typical practice; these rehearsals take place from 27 November through to 5 December 2004. Most of these rehearsals take place anywhere from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. on campus. The general rehearsal typically begins

about 20 minutes to 1 hour behind the scheduled time, although a few individual-partial rehearsals may have been initiated several minutes earlier. In Bali, a sense of time and its importance exists that is very different from the Western concept. Punctuality is not important; everything happens in its own time and other factors concerning family and temple nearly always take precedence over a specific event such as a rehearsal.

As all dancers for this particular performance are faculty members of ISI Denpasar, many of the partial rehearsals take place around the room or in the front office of appropriate faculty members who are also the main performers. They are mostly accompanied by tape-recorded music or they create music vocally, imitating the corresponding musical piece. The partial rehearsal concentrates on the section that requires a group dance or at least more than one dancer. If an individual dancer practises independently, that dancer typically rehearses to perfect technique and certain movements or song or speech diction. No instructor is needed as they are all instructors themselves, both in their village and at the Institute. In a village rehearsal, there would usually be an outside eye, such as a fellow dancer, at such rehearsals.

About 20 minutes' drive north-east of the capital city Denpasar, the Gambuh performance was held in the temple of Gegaduhan Jagat in conjunction with the Ngusaba celebration. This is a major festival that takes place in each village about every ten years; if the village does not yet have enough resources, the festival might be postponed for several more years. It is a purification ceremony designed to achieve balance between human and other humans, humans and gods and between humans and the environment. The festival must run a minimum of 11 days. Throughout this period, rituals and performances of various forms always occur. Certain performances are required, and Gambuh, for example, must be presented at least twice. There are also performances of Topeng and Wayang.

The local villagers set the plan for celebrating the festival and collected the funds to pay for the performances one year ahead. Many villages do not have their own specialist Gambuh troupe and must hire one – in this case from ISI Denpasar. Preparing the ceremony has taken about three weeks. Early in the morning of the ceremonial day, villagers begin the preparations according to their own village role. A certain number of people are assigned to escort three holy priests while others are assigned to welcome a number of artist-performers from surrounding areas. The rest of the villagers are in charge of a number of ceremonial preparations in the temple, such as making or distributing offerings, playing gamelan music, dancing, singing ritual songs, assisting priests, making and distributing foods and drinks and staging cockfights.

All the dancers in this case are faculty members; most of the musicians, too, are faculty, supported by a smaller number of students. At about 7 a.m.,

this group leaves from the Institute and travels together to the performance site. The gamelan musicians are taken directly to the ceremonial performance site at the temple known as Gegaduhan Jagat, while all dancers are led to a family house across from the temple where they are served drinks and several types of Balinese cakes. The dancers begin to dress into special costumes, which takes a little over an hour. During this process, the sacred headdresses of the Gambuh dancers are consecrated and the Pamangku (the local priest) sprinkles the dancers with holy water. A similar ceremony is observed for the Topeng masks and headdresses. In Balinese culture, the head is considered holy and the closest point of the body to the gods. The welcome food and drinks are served later to the musicians after the orchestra has been set up. This communal welcoming is an important part of the preparation processes at work in the festival, and it ensures integration of the visitors into the community. The ceremonial aspects of blessing the masks and headdresses are also part of the performance preparation for all the participants. Western actors will similarly prepare, also partly through the costume, while gazing into the mirror and feeling the sense of the new character establishing itself. In a way, this takes the actors outside of themselves and allows a mild form of possession to take place; in the Western context, this is, of course, mainly or entirely a conscious process. At the same time, when about to perform a complex, demanding role actors may, in true Stanislavskian fashion, begin emotional preparation using deliberate psychological processes. However, in the Balinese system the performers prepare spiritually as a group, bonded together and reminded of the spiritual function of their performance. In the case of the more holy performance forms, sometimes involving states of trance, the dressing/bleasing procedures take on an even more crucial function of preparation.

About an hour later, the ceremony itself begins. Several full and semi-formalised theatrical forms occur simultaneously, with the performance of various ritual and communal theatre rites. The villagers present themselves in temple dress to participate in various parts of the ceremony. Men and boys dress with a symbolic masculine knot (*kancut*) on the front of their wrap-round cloth (*kamen*) and wear a headdress that is usually white. Women and girls put on a tightly wrapped cloth (also known as *kamen*) and decorate their braided hair with flowers; most females these days wear false hair or wigs to represent the traditional long, braided hair, which is regarded as a symbol of beauty. Most women, especially teenagers, use light facial make-up and scents, unlike the strong perfumes and make-up employed by the dancers.

Three Pedanda priests (representing the three holy realms) lead the overall ceremony, cited on the main, tallest, raised pavilion. These priests, invited from adjacent areas, consist of a Siwa from Padang Tegal village, a

Buddhist from the village of Batuan Padang Aji and a Bujangga Rsi from Kesiman village. Before each performance area (*kalangan*) can be used, they are all consecrated to appease the Butha (lower spirits) before their earth can be stepped on. On the upper stage of the largest hall, the Gong Kebyar music ensemble of about 35 musicians begins with an overture. Soon after, it accompanies the Rejang dance of 30 girls and the Baris dance that uses 30 boys. After each group has performed about 15 minutes respectively, the dancers join a procession, first circling the perimeter of the main ceremonial tower of offering three times, which is assembled at the front of the priests' pavilion. Next, on the perimeter, below a smaller offering tower, a Topeng performer with a basket of masks is waiting to begin. The same music ensemble finally accompanies his Topeng Pajegan show – a solo-performance masked theatre. This masked show, enacting the local chronicle, is staged in front of the female chorus, which is singing praises to the gods. In the left corner of the same hall, the ritual Wayang Lemah puppet performance is in progress. Various ritual processions proceed simultaneously with all these performance arts. As always, colourful and elaborate forms of offering are placed, offered or dedicated in every part of the ceremonial site. There were offerings for the God witness, human witness and lower Butha spirit witness. In term of placement, the simultaneous performance may be visualised as shown in Figure 4.4.

The female chorus recite the kidung song with lyrics glorifying higher spiritual powers, similar to those performed in a Western church Sunday service. A smaller group of people are assembled around a ritual dramatic reading (*kakawin*) in which one person reads and at the same time sings the lyric of a dramatic poem, which is derived either from local, Javanese and mostly Indian epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. In front of the female chorus, the Topeng Pajegan masked one-man show enacts a story drawn from the local chronicle *babad*, accompanied by the Gong Kebyar music orchestra. The dancer shifts from one character to the other by changing his mask, headdress, speech diction, rhetoric and vocabulary of movements. The audience generally admires the technique rather than being drawn much into the narrative as this is already well known to them.

At the front right side of the priest's pavilion and away from the largest hall, about 30 musicians from the Institute begin to play the Semar Pagulingan, a musical ensemble with an overture. While the Gong Kebyar features the Pelog scale, the Semar Pagulingan features the Slendro scale. After playing the overture, the ensemble plays to accompany the Gambuh dance-drama until the end of the show.

Gambuh was not traditionally accompanied by the Semar Pagulingan percussive ensemble but by a giant flute-base pagambuhan orchestra, as can be still seen in several home villages of Gambuh, such as Batuan and



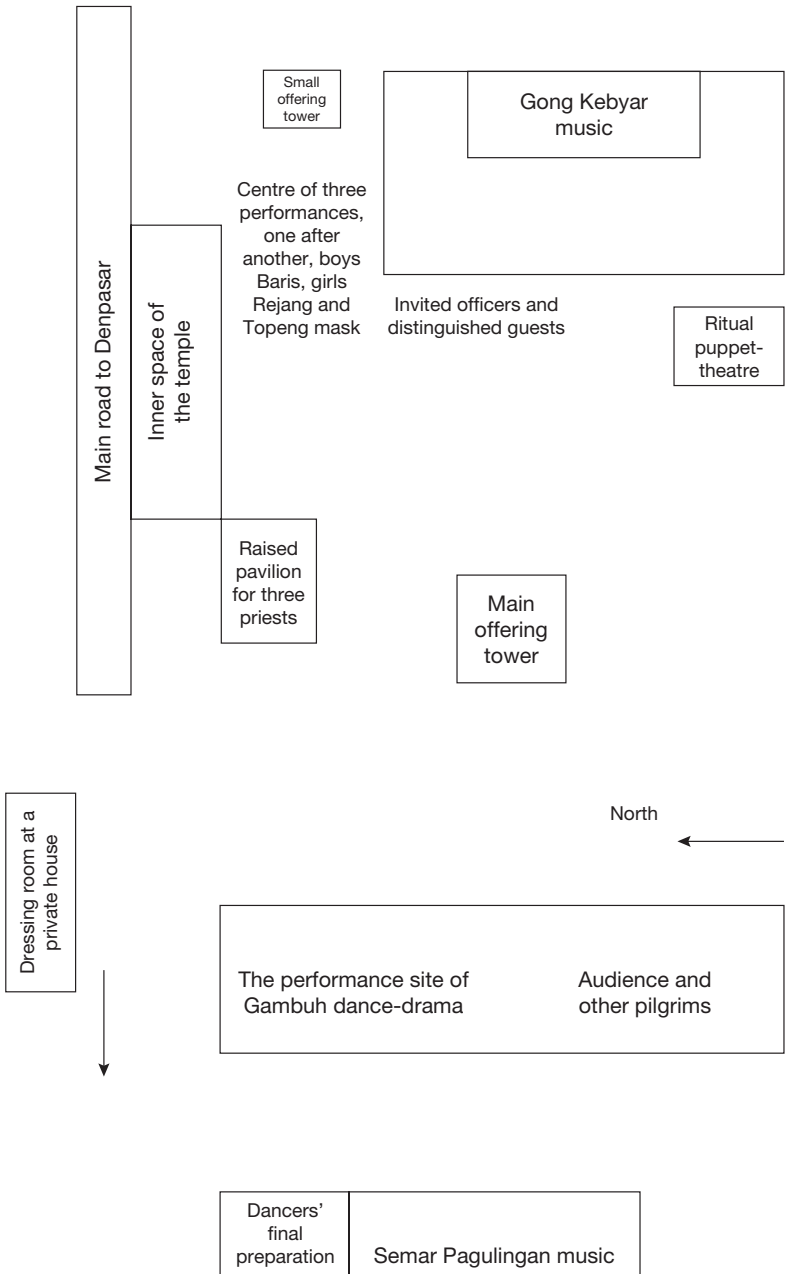


Figure 4.4 The temple of Gegaduhan Jagat

Pedungan. In these villages, Gambuh performance always employs bamboo flutes, from three to six, which are one metre long. In fact, most music students at ISI Denpasar are more skilful or advanced in percussion than in the wind-based music such as flutes. Consequently, the Semar Pagulingan percussion is preferred and prevails over the flute-based pagambuhan orchestras. Some musicians believe that they are unable to feel fully involved with the ceremony when they are lost behind the long flutes. As often happens, as it did on this occasion, only two musicians with several short flutes played alternatively, according to the piece being performed. The posture necessary for playing the long flutes involves leaning forward with the eyes towards the ground, thereby, perhaps, generating that sense of disconnection from the events of the ceremony.

Both the music and choreography of Gambuh dance-drama are well structured so, consequently, the drummer and other musicians do not follow the dancers' cues closely, as in the technique observed in the form of Topeng dance-drama described later in this chapter. Except for the buffoons or servants who enjoy a little room for improvisation in the Gambuh performance, all dancers and musician are bound by precise structural dramatic plots, conventional body posture, cadence, position, floor pattern/designs upon which group dancers make the formations, vocabulary of movements, lines of speech and diction, choreography and composition.

Not only do most women outside the temple's theatrical space wear false hair or wigs, but both male and female dancers within the theatrical space also wear them. In the burning scene of the play, in which four male Arya dancers burn down a market, the dancers used four bamboo torches. Although the bamboo torches were well prepared with wicks of coconut skin and filled with gasoline, during the show the wicks were not lit for fear of the wigs catching fire.

In this particular performance, the Gambuh only has about a dozen distinctive characters. However, on other occasions, there are often many more, depending on the story being enacted. As the way of perceiving and treating characterisation differs from that of Western practice, it is important to note that, although the story/play is different, the stock character, including Condong, Kakan-Kakan, Demang Tumenggung and Panji always have the same composition/choreography, costume and structure for the performance. Only a little modification is made in structuring the narration, dialogue and song, or adding or reducing the number of other characters. Another difference lies in the way of treating group dancers such as the Kakan-Kakan 'female attendants' as one character, although six dancers present the same role. Consequently, other groups of dancers such as Arya 'courtiers' that consist of at least four dancers, are treated as one unified, simultaneous character. The effect is close to that of the chorus in a Greek

tragedy, for example. These group dancers always appear in any performance, as do the solo Condong and Panji characters, regardless of the story being enacted. We can see, therefore, that Gambuh characterisation is not an individual personality, but rather the essence or quintessence of character. Panji in Gambuh is an epitomised prince or the quintessence of prince, whether he is Raden Inu Kertapati or Hamlet or Ferdinand, etc. Condong is the quintessence of a maid servant and always appears in the first entrance of any Gambuh performance, whether she is accompanying the princess Rangkesari or Ophelia or Miranda, etc. Similarly, Arya and Kakan-Kakan are epitomised 'courtiers' and 'female attendants', no matter to what kingdom they belong or what kingdom is featured in the enacted story. In this case study, enacting the story of Kelanacarang Nagapuspa, the name of each character is written in Table 2.1 on page 28.

The play-based dramatic character in the West is identified based on the who, what, how, where, and when. The genre-based character in Gambuh is identified by the integrated elements of dance, with its coded body posture, movement, conventional structure and distinctive costume. Gambuh characters also have a unique musical repertoire with its own structure and narrative vocals with conventional rhetoric, speech and diction. Also, emblematic weapons and other dramatic devices or accessories are included.

As in most Balinese genres, music is absolutely essential in Gambuh performance. Having a performance without accompaniment of some kind of gamelan music is unthinkable. Of the 30 existing divergent Balinese ensembles, only two are employed to accompany the performance of Gambuh: the flute-based Pagambuhan music ensembles and the percussion-based Semar Pagulingan music ensembles. The sound of the first ensemble is softer than that of the second. While the first consists of a little more than a dozen musicians, the second consists of more than two dozen. Although the instruments and playing technique are quite different, both ensembles share the same scale of the pentatonic pelog seven-tone tuning system. Consequently, they can also share the repertoires, both dramatically and instrumentally.

The Pagambuhan ensemble, which has fewer instruments and is more portable than that of the Semarpagulingan, integrates melodic and percussive instruments plus one *juru tandak* (singer), although for varying reasons the singer is often omitted. The melodic instruments of the Pagambuhan consist of three to six giant bamboo flutes (*suling*), about 1m in length and 6cm in diameter. The rhythmical instruments consist of a set of cymbals (*cengceng*), the small knobbed *klenang*, *kajar*, *kempur* chimes and *gumanak* (banana shaped metal percussive instruments). Bell clusters (*gentorag*) are also used. A pair of medium-size drums (*kendang*) rhythmically lead all the instruments of the ensemble.

In addition to accompanying the dance-drama, this Pagambuhan ensemble also traditionally accompanies Wayang Gambuh shadow theatre, telling stories about overlapping and lengthy versions of the love adventures of Panji, a prince from East Java.

The Semar Pagulingan ensemble is on the seven-tone (slendro) pentatonic scale. The melodic instruments of the Semar Pagulingan consist of a lire (*rebab*), flutes (*suling*) and *gender rambat*, *pemade*, *panyacah*, *calung* and *jegog*. The leader of these melodic instruments is the *trompong*, the longest instrument with 14 knobbed keys, played by one musician with two rod stick mallets. The flat-keyed *gender rambat*, *pemade*, *panyacah*, *calung*, *jegog* and knobbed *trompong* metallophone instruments are suspended over bamboo resonators and struck by wooden mallets to create the music. The shimmering sound of paired instruments is the result of combining the ‘male’ (*pangisep*) and ‘female’ (*pangumbang*) instruments. When played together they complement but do not exactly replicate a tone. Identical pitches on the two instruments are not identical in frequency, thus producing the acoustical beating so characteristic of Balinese instrumental music.

The rhythmical instruments consist of the big knob *kempur* chime, small knob *klentong* and *kajar* chime and the time-keeper, *gentorag*, bell cluster. The leader of these melodic instruments is a pair of medium-size drums (*kendang*). Further, major parts of the music in the performance of Gambuh are an integral part of the dramatic expression. Just as the different musical pieces create different dramatic atmospheres, so the musical ensemble helps define the specific type of character in its specific mood and action; an audience can immediately determine the type of character being performed by simply hearing the accompanying music. The specific piece being played can alert a knowledgeable audience member as to the overall progress of the performance, the nature of a specific scene/episode, the specific dramatic character and the movements. Playing certain pieces with all its *angsel* (rhythm, melody, and tempo) cadences can indicate dramatic moods, emotions and movements of the dance. Even before a character appears and speaks a line, certain musical pieces often effectively establish a specific dramatic mood.

Broadly speaking, the gamelan music for Gambuh performance falls into two major types of pieces. The first, smaller group consists of instrumental pieces played without the dancers, as an overture for the musicians to warm up on. These repertoires are often a unit of selected pieces featured as a form of concert to demonstrate their musical skill and at the same time to suggest to the audience that the performance is about to begin. A smaller portion of the piece is also played after all the dancers exit and the story is over, in order to conclude the show. These song repertoires may be termed instrumental as no dance or drama accompanies them.

The second more numerous and more dominant musical group consists of repertoires where both dancers and musicians are simultaneously constrained by the preset structural composition and choreography of a performance. Music then serves as an integrated structural component of dramatic presentation. Therefore, these numerous repertoires may be called *dramatic*. These dramatic repertoires are indispensable in establishing characters in Gambuh show.

When collaborating with the dancing, the musicians generally identify the music as five phased pieces with a chronological order, as follows:

- 1 Introduction, termed as *papeson* (entrance), collaboratively creates the quintessence of the character. The specific story selected for the show is not yet revealed.
- 2 Main part, called *pangawak* (body) or *pangadeng* (slowness), masks the dancer into a character with a certain dramatic mood. For some characters, such as the prince and princess, the part is often repeated or has more than one version, depending on the dramatic arrangement, but is never played more than three times or in more than three versions. The exposition of the narrative aspect begins as this phase starts.
- 3 Elaboration, known as *pangecet* (embellishment), provides a rising musical action and spirit that leads the character to proceed with an obsession or major point of focus.
- 4 Acceleration, termed as *pangelik* (culmination), accompanies the *pangrangrang* (strutting) part of the dance. The music's tempo increasingly elaborates and speeds up as the dance devolves its complexity and achieves the climax.
- 5 Resolution, termed as *pakaad* (dismiss), is the falling action towards a shift of dramatic music or the alternation of the scenes or conclusion.

As both dance and music are simultaneously constrained by the preset structural composition, the dance structure also consists of five chronological divisions, similar to the music:

- 1 Introduction, termed as *papeson* (entrance), is the introductory part of the dance. The dancer executes a specific vocabulary of movements and positions that define a given character.
- 2 Main part, called *pangawak* (body), is more theatrical than dance based. Since the exposition of the narrative aspect begins at this phase, the dancer increasingly uses spoken dialogue, pointing or communicating gestures and sung lines, instead of only a mute dance as in the introductory sequence. To satisfy the dramatic arrangement, this part

is often repeated or has more than one version, but no more than three; afterwards a little transitional interlude is included.

- 3 Elaboration, known as *pangecet* (embellishment), provides a rising dramatic action as the performer develops and demonstrates the central concern of the character.
- 4 Acceleration, termed as *pangrangrang* (strutting) or *pangelik* (culmination), is the moment when the dance, alongside the music, increasingly elaborates its vocabulary and complexity and forces the tempo towards dramatic climax.
- 5 Resolution, termed as *pakaad* (dismiss), is a brief choreography that indicates that the performance will conclude. In referring to those musical and dance structures, some practitioners make an analogy, seeing the structure of the composition as a living creature: the introduction is analogous to the head accompanied by the body; the elaboration and the acceleration are the hands and feet, while the last one, resolution, is the tail.

Dramatic character is first built and identified through costume, especially the *gelungan* headdress, the holiest part. Even when dancers are still busy making final preparations in the dressing room, before any stage action is performed, each headdress they put on can already define precisely who will enact the princess, her servant, prince or courtiers, etc. Female characters typically wear a slim neck ornament that is much larger than a normal necklace. The male characters wear a large neck ornament that also covers their shoulders. All dramatic characters wear a shirt: females wear a plain long-sleeve shirt and males wear a black, blue or other dark-velvet, long-sleeve shirt. Only the male comic servants use a short-sleeve shirt: the lower their social status, the shorter their sleeves, so that the servant who always accompanies the leading character prince Panji, Turas, only puts on a small vest that looks something like a lifejacket.

Mostly female characters and refined male characters wear the chest band, although the central front part may be partly covered by the neck dressing. All males (except comic characters) use a large, velvet, ornamented bracelet, while female characters put on small leather bracelets and armbands, bound to, and sitting on, their white shirts. All male characters wear a colourful, buttonless robe/overcoat that is entirely open at the front, so that the white cloth and the waist belt that binds and covers it is visible from the front. All female characters wear a gold painted cloth on top.

Instead of using a robe, the female character is fully wrapped by a long golden belt from her chest down to above her hip, where her colourful cloth hangs down and fully covers her down to her feet. The princess and her maid servant wear an extra long cloth, leaving a train of material about 30 cm

long that drags between her feet. The *lancingan* (tail), formed by a gathering of cloth, is a symbol of maleness that protrudes from the tip of his white cloth and hangs at the front of all male characters. Underneath this cloth are long white trousers covered at the bottom by the *stewel* (foot dress).

Although the language is not as important and complex as that in a shadow-puppet show, the performance of Gambuh still employs two different languages: all servants speak the Balinese language and the other higher characters speak Kawi, as used in the narrative source called *Kidung Malat*. In building a character in Gambuh, the accuracy of diction is more important than language, because diction specifies the tempo, dynamic, rhythm, melody and harmony of the spoken language appropriate to a given character.

Speech diction in larger parts is similar or directly related to the rhetorical type of each character that specifies how low, high, big or small the performer's voice should be. Along with the vocabulary of movement, diction/rhetoric is required to build dramatic styles ranging from extremely humble to pompous. For example, the rhetoric/diction for the princess, no matter to who/what/where she belongs, must be slow, high, sweet and soft; for any courtiers it must be big, low and harsh. Outside observers may think that several characters such as the king and prime minister often employ strange-sounding mystical language in passages of text, or individual lines or words, but it is actually a vocal cue for the musicians and also emphasises the aristocratic manners and style.

Balinese songs (*Tembang*) have five major categories:

- 1 Kakawin poem;
- 2 Kakidung choir;
- 3 Macapat poetry;
- 4 Dolanan lullaby;
- 5 Tetandakan narrative music.

However, most scholars divide the *Tembang* song into four categories, without mentioning the fifth, the *Tetandakan*, perhaps because this variant depends on its distinctive instrumental musical constituent. The *Tetandakan* song only exists when the vocal part is in harmony with the instrumental music. Of those five song categories, only the last one is featured in Gambuh.

*Tandak* (*Tetandakan* in plural form) is a vocal art that embellishes the melody and faithfully merges with or often sits one octave above the pitch/tone of the gamelan instrumental music. In embellishing the melody, the main part of *tandak* is free to make elaboration, but the *tandak* may be concluded a little later than the instrumental in order to expand the last syllable of the song. Although the *tandak* line typically goes one octave

above the octave played in the gamelan, the pitch must follow the key played in the gamelan. Thus, the tempo and melody of *tandak* are relatively free from the line played in gamelan, but the pitch must be exactly the same or one octave above the gamelan. The briefest sung line, often only a short phrase that precedes the speech of a hero or a king, is known as *Pangolin Ratu*. Although this song is really short, rendered only in two blows out (exhaling breath as the longest) in accordance to personal preference of the dancer, the dramatic significance is to give the first clue regarding the mood and personal identity of the character. A rumbling voice, laughter, curses or coughing always concludes this song and intensifies and reinforces the tenet and attributes of the character, before the main speech begins.

Most of the male characters wear a *kris* dagger attached horizontally on the back or attached to the waist belt. Only Panji and Kebo Angun-angun use the *kris* dagger for the fighting scene during the last part of the performance. In the case study, these rules usually were observed. As mentioned earlier, the use of torches was unusual as they are normally lit and it is indeed likely that problems with the wigs were to blame. This particular performance also minimised use of props and accessories that are commonly found in many productions. Fans, scarves and letters are often used and sometimes, for example, an abstract horse is used to communicate a travelling scene. This performance seemed to deliberately avoid such theatrical dressings and concentrated on a purer, simpler, perhaps more traditional style.

The story featured in the performance is entitled *Klanacarang Naga Puspa*. The title is drawn from the name of one of the leading characters, the prince. In the narrative, the prince disguises himself in order to carry away his fiancée. The plot is simple and the show is divided into three general acts as follows:

#### *Act One*

In the palace of Daha kingdom, the lady in attendance, Condong, calls her sisters, *kakan-kakan* maid servants, to prepare for the arrival of Princess Diah Ratna Merta. In elaborate movements and choreography typical of Balinese female dance, Condong leads six *kakan-kakan* maid servants to assist and entertain their princess. Seen from the choreographic perspective, the section chronologically features the solo dance of Condong, and then the group dance led by Condong, the duet dance between Condong and the princess, and finally the group dances with everyone.

#### *Act Two*

In Jenggala kingdom, the siblings of two courtiers, Demang and Tumenggung, comically glorify themselves as court attendants. The



scene features a perfect balance between an aggressive demanding older brother, Demang, and an agreeable humble younger brother, Tumenggung. Four knights/courtiers, Para Arya, appear in unified male choreography.

Prince Panji, accompanied by his servant Turas, disguises himself as Klanacarang Naga Puspa by changing his headdress and commands his four knights to burn down Daha's market in order to deflect people's attention so that he can easily kidnap Princess Diah Ratna Merta.

### *Act Three*

The king of Jenggala kingdom sends one of his prime ministers, Kebo Angun-Angun (chief advisor), to find out why Panji has not come home yet. When Kebo Angun-Angun arrives at Daha, he encounters a riot in the burned market and becomes involved in a duel with the leading provocateur, Klanacarang Naga Puspa. When Kebo Angun-Angun is about to defeat Klanacarang, Klanacarang reveals himself as Panji so that Kebo Angun-Angun can recognise him.

Gambuh has roots in the fifteenth-century Majapahit Empire. As in Elizabethan England when lords patronised theatre companies, so, too, many Balinese kings sponsored Gambuh troupes, reflecting their power over the island. The glory days of the Balinese kingdoms were also the heyday of Gambuh until about 20 years after Indonesian independence. Balinese kings of Klungkung, Gianyar and Badung still patronised Gambuh dance-drama for various occasions in the palace. Each palace always had a Gambuh pavilion, Balai Pegambuhan, many of which still remain today. They were designed and constructed specially as a site for Gambuh performance, thereby indicating the importance of the form to the kingdoms of the past. The Gambuh Hall that still exists in the palace of Gianyar, for example, has a dimension of about 10 metres in width and 24 metres in length. Considering the location of the Gambuh Hall on the south-west corner of the palace, which is the most accessible site for public audience from the south and west gates, we can assume that the surrounding villagers must also have enjoyed the opportunity to see Gambuh performance along with the kings and courtiers.

On request from a village, the king also sponsored a performance for village occasions, particularly for temple celebrations. Although the king was also said to recruit many other artists besides Gambuh into an elite group of court artists and other genres such as Topeng and Arja were also performed in the same hall, the name of the hall remained Gambuh Hall; palaces never had Topeng or Arja halls. Consequently, Gambuh has always

held a special status as the highest form of court performance. Gambuh troupes at the villages of Pekandelan Batuan and Menesa Puseh Pedungan (both still in existence, with different types of sponsorship in contemporary Bali) were the two main groups of Gambuh that had enjoyed the royal patronage. The former troupe enjoyed sponsorship from the King of Gianyar, while the latter troupe from the King of Badung. When the court discontinued its patronage in the 1990s, Gambuh rapidly declined in popularity.

However, because of its unique demonstration of exquisite artistry, Gambuh has recently gained new support from various resources to help its survival. For example, the Ford Foundation provides financial support to the Gambuh troupe of Batuan village, so that the troupe can now perform regularly for tourists at 7:00 p.m. on the first and fifteen day of the month, or twice a month. This, therefore, helps the same troupe survive and perform for temple ceremonies.

Through contemporary interpretations and new theatrical approaches, Gambuh is undergoing new artistic modifications and developments. With support from other overseas organisations, such as the Arti Foundation, for example, they recently performed a Gambuh enacting a story based on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. While maintaining the main unique style of acting, dance, music ensemble and repertoires, the *Macbeth* Gambuh simplified the ornamentation of the headdresses, foot decoration and dance costumes and modified the structure, composition, choreography, stock scene characters and added new stage props according to the needs of the play. Although opinion was divided among Balinese audiences, the production was well liked on an overseas tour and demonstrated that Gambuh could easily adapt and evolve like so many of the offshoots it has already spawned across the centuries. Many other such experiments are likely to be attempted in the future, although, as far as temple ceremonies are concerned, it will certainly remain as it always has been and maintain its place as the highest and purest of court dance-dramas.

If Gambuh is the highest demonstration of classical Balinese performance, demonstrating a whole company working in effect as a chorus, then Topeng, the subject of Chapter 5, exhibits, in contrast, the individual performer at work. In Gambuh, the individual is of secondary importance as grand spectacle and aesthetics of choreography dominate, but Topeng is very involved with direct performer/audience contact and topical references. Topeng, like Gambuh, uses carefully learnt, intricate movements and gestures as has been explored in Gambuh, but the entire performance is dominated by a single performer/narrator who is committed to a direct relationship with his audience.

## 5 Topeng masked theatre

Topeng is the performance form in Bali that most strongly demonstrates the acting and performance skills within both stylised and realistic acting styles from an individual actor/dancer. From the training to the rich and complex performance itself, technique is strongly emphasised in movement, gesture, use of mask, characterisation, structured improvisation and use of humour. Topeng Pajegan, the one-man form of Topeng, is a full demonstration of the virtuoso performer at work, as a single male actor/dancer moves between traditionally structured limits and boundaries on the one hand and improvisation on the other. Throughout the performance he must act, sing, narrate and transform himself from one character to another with masks. He must also deal with an interesting actor–audience relationship as he subtly blends a serious ceremonial function with entertainment involving jokes and topical references.

The words *Topeng*, *tupeng* or *tapel* literally mean mask, which is employed in the performance of Balinese performing art forms and genres, such as Barong, Wayang Wong, Prembon, Calonarang, Telek, Topeng and several, newer, experimental dance and dance-drama styles. However, the Balinese use the term *Topeng* mostly to refer to the masked dance-drama forms. In terms of the number of dancers involved in a performance, Topeng may be distinguished into two: Topeng Pajegan (one-man show) and Topeng Panca (generally with five dancers or at least more than one). The stories enacted in the performance of Topeng are derived from both Balinese and Javanese myths and actual local history. The Balinese people commonly believe that to sponsor a Topeng performance, enacting the life of their ancestors, is a way to worship, celebrate and, at the same time, to request blessing from those ancestors. Understanding the underlying belief system is essential to fully appreciate the dynamic between actor/dancer and the audience during the actual performance. It is not just a question of aesthetical appreciation and entertainment, although both are important for enjoying Topeng. In effect, a communal event takes place that allows an understood sharing of

community history and culture when Topeng is performed, and the underlying shared belief system is exemplified by closely examining a Topeng performance in contemporary Bali. The fact that Topeng is specifically connected to local history and myth adds to the link between performer and audience and explains, in part, the continuing popularity of the form. Performances are mainly connected to specific temple ceremonies, although private commissions of performances also take place. Therefore, Topeng can be used in very sacred ceremonies such as the Odalan temple purification ceremony, but also at weddings and cremations.

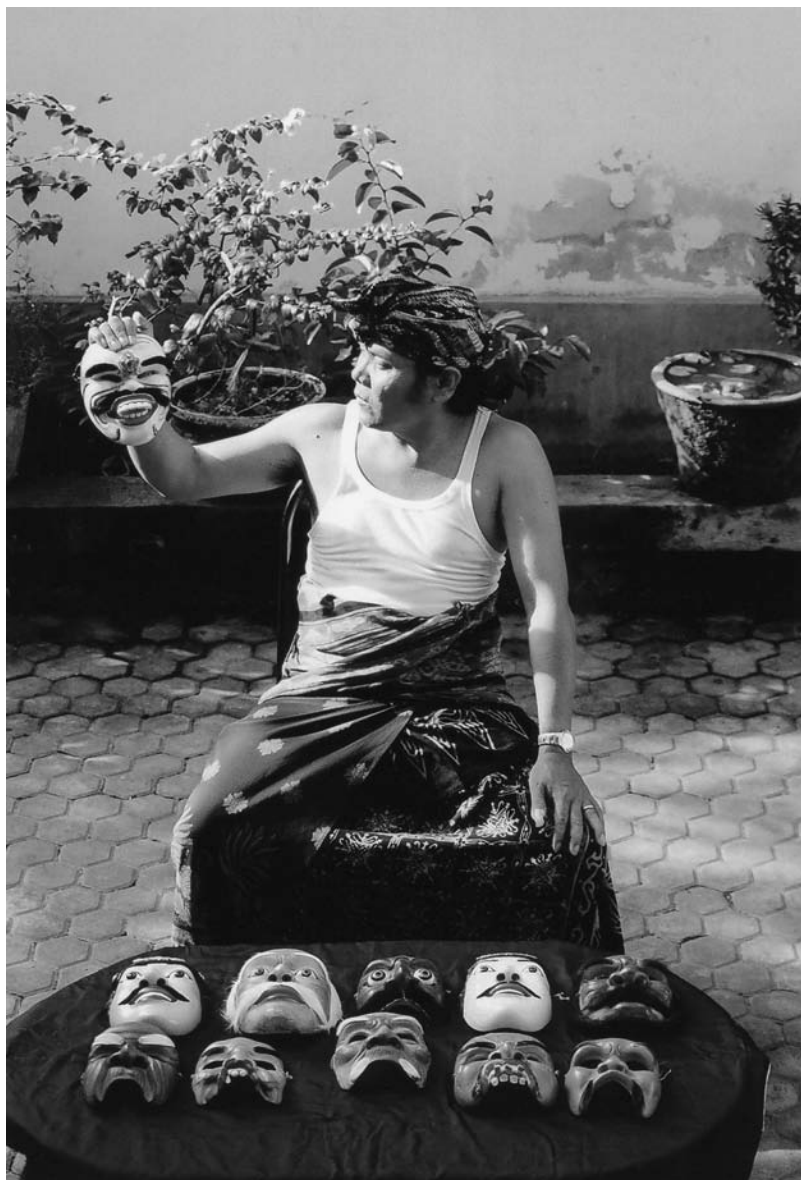
Some scholars trace the first known origin of Topeng back to the copperplate charter Prasasti Bebetin dated AD 896 inscribed during the reign of King Ugrasena of Bedulu kingdom. The charter identifies the word *pertapukan* as the masked dancer, along with a list of artists of the courts, servants, functionaries and even *juru jalir* – a prostitute. Prapanca's *Negara Kertagama*, the most authoritative book from the fourteenth century on the leadership of the Majapahit kingdom, describes how King Hayam Wuruk and his queen performed a masked dance story from the Panji cycle. The origin of masked dance is also traced to the Babad Dalem (court chronicle) of Sukawati. This chronicle mentions that the king of Sukawati, Dewa Agung Made Karna (1775–1825), commissioned the production of Topeng Legong based on images of celestial angels that he encountered in a dream. This particular type of Topeng is still used and ritually performed in Ketewel, Sukawati and known as the Sanghyang Legong trance dance. Although related, it is unique and substantially different to the Sanghyang trance rituals and performance described earlier in this book. The masks used for the performance at the temple in Ketewel are considered so holy that they must not be photographed, are stored safely away in a special room and are only brought out for rare performances. The guardian priest of the temple believes that when the dancers put on the masks, they are transformed in magical ways and acquire almost celestial beauty. This attitude towards those unique masks is indicative of some of the beliefs and superstitions connected to using masks in certain circumstances. External commentators often do not fully understand these beliefs, as in most cases the masks have a specific and clear non-magical function. However, some other scholars lean towards an alternative, documented history known as Babad Blahbatuh. This manuscript from the sixteenth century is kept with a collection of masks thought to be the oldest surviving Topeng masks in Bali. According to the recorded history, the masks originated in East Java and had been captured by a member of the Jelantik family during an attack. They were left unused for nearly a hundred years. The masks were then used for a performance of a new drama after the middle of the seventeenth century. This was then established as a tradition approximately every

six months, for the Odalan festival, even when the family relocated to Blahbatuh. Whichever history is accepted, the result today is the same, as Topeng Pajegan has survived as a strong and popular form of performance that exemplifies the subtle and dynamic use of the most recognised Balinese form of mask. Odalan is still one of the regular festivals to use a Topeng Pajegan performance during the ritual celebrations.

Most Balinese people are concerned about the social, religious and entertainment purposes and functions of a Topeng show, rather than historical detail. As is common in many aspects of Balinese life, details of origins and roots of ritual and performance often have a hazy recorded history, based on anecdotal evidence; researchers often encounter contradictory accounts and apparently conflicting facts as, ultimately, most Balinese are concerned with purpose and not historical accuracy. The key function or role of Topeng within Balinese society is based mainly on the origin of masked dancodrama that is mentioned in ancient mythology and recorded in the Lontar manuscripts entitled *Siwagama*, *Purwagama* and *Cudamani*. The main story (referred to in Chapter 2, pages 21–2) is also relevant to Topeng, that is, another performance genre that deals with purification and pacification of Butha Kala (evil spirits).

In another mythical example of this exorcism, specifically related to the purpose and the origin of Topeng masked theatre, Brahma (Lord of fire) first transformed himself into Topeng Bang (performed in a red mask); Iswara (Lord of sound) became Barong Swari (a lion-like mythological masked figure); Bayu (the Lord of wind) became Dalang Samirana (literally means multi-function puppeteer); while Visnu (the Lord of water) transformed himself into Telek (performed as a refined masked dance). All these transformations were in order to exorcise the terrifying evil spirit offspring of Durga and Kala Ludraka. This exorcism and restoration of balance is the final climax of any ceremonial or sacred Topeng performance as, whatever takes place during the storytelling, harmony must be achieved before the end. These mythical origins and stories also link to the roots of shadow-puppet performance and indicate the intense relationship between religious belief, cultural myths and performance throughout the Balinese repertoire. The end of a Topeng performance is worthy of particular attention as the rituals involving the final mask, Sidhakarya, are highly theatrical and entertaining but also at the heart of the final function of the whole process. The audience often become very animated at the end and children sometimes scream and run around as Sidhakarya tries to playfully grab them.

Some scholars also advocate that Topeng Pajegan as a whole is designed to express a symbolic understanding of the cycles of existence: birth, life and death. The first character is therefore strong as in the life-force, Topeng



*Figure 5.1* I Ketut Kodi, mask maker and Topeng performer



*Figure 5.2* A typical set of masks from a Topeng performance by I Ketut Kodi

Gras; the second to appear is the old man, representing the afternoon of life and experience of the world, *Topeng Tua*; the end of the performance brings *Sidhakarya*, who has the face of a dead man who enigmatically still wears a smile. In the middle are all the other Topeng characters that depict the struggles and events of life and the conflicts between good and evil. In this way of understanding a performance, the actor is at the centre of the Balinese universe, standing in for the symbol of the swastika as each character moves from imbalance to imbalance from left to right and from up to down, in a continual movement that seems to search for that elusive balance. In the centre of the stage area, the performer establishes the directions so crucial to all orientation of Balinese religious philosophy: North, South, East, West, North East, South East, South West, North West, up and down. Symbolically, the characters move and place themselves according to appropriate positions (see the architectural discussion in Chapter 1, pages 7–9). The refined characters, king and queen etc., have a light upward movement as though flying towards the gods, whereas the evil or strong characters are aggressively looking for balance and often change their centre of balance dramatically and abruptly; their movements are earthy and downward. In addition to the narrative that is communicated in a fairly simple and direct way, the performer is also conveying the unities and dualities so often present in Balinese philosophy. Within the story, good and evil are always



locked in eternal wrestling as each needs the other to exist. In the same way, other dualities in the universe are explored and expressed: tears and laughter, night and day, and inhalation and exhalation of breath are frequently invoked. Even at the end there is no clear triumph of good or evil as in the Western tradition: in the Balinese way nothing is so clear.

Looking at the way performance functions in Balinese society, Topeng may be distinguished into three categories: the sacred Topeng Pajegan (one-man show); the ceremonial Topeng Panca (five actors); and the secular Topeng Bondres. The most sacred part of the Topeng performance is with the mask of Sidhakarya, which always appears as the last character in a Topeng performance. The Sidhakarya character always concludes the performance of Topeng Pajegan, and may also conclude the performance of Topeng Panca, but never concludes or is included in the Topeng Bondres. However, some comical Bondres characters are always included in the middle part of the Topeng Panca and Topeng Pajegan. The holy and profound status of Sidhakarya cannot be involved within the comic, profane world but comic characters can sit comfortably within the sacred performance world. Today, in Bali, the Sidhakarya mask itself is still treated with great respect and is kept in a special place and container in a house. Whereas children may be allowed to play with other masks, for example, this sacred mask must not be touched out of context and is considered spiritually dangerous. As indicated above, in Balinese thinking and belief good and evil often reside side by side and have a continuous relationship; there is no simple Western division into good and evil. In the same way, the Barong mask (the best-known image of Balinese masked performance for tourists because of the large number of secularised shows regularly staged for visitors), which in effect protects the community against the evil spirits, is itself dangerous. So, too, does Sidhakarya have ambiguous qualities that leave a sense of fear behind in spite of the purification that he achieves.

The term *Sidhakarya* consists of two words: *Sidha* meaning successful and *karya* meaning religious work or celebration. This purpose and function of Sidhakarya may be seen by translating his ritualistic monologue and incantation. Just as many ritual celebrations are performed regularly for the belief and faith of the underlying myths of a given ritual, so too with the Sidhakarya – there is a myth mixed with history underlying the performance of this Topeng. The major myth that serves as the philosophical foundation of why the Balinese are still ritually obligated to perform this masked theatre is based on the Prasasti Sidhakarya charter, which is still kept in the village of Sidhakarya, about four kilometres south of the capital city, Denpasar. The mask is thought to be based on a real priest, dating back to the reign of King Dalem Watuenggong (1551–1651). The myth or, as the Balinese people insist, *sejarah* (history), may be summarised as follows:



One day on the island of Madura, on the north-west part of Bali, Brahmana Kayumanis told his son, Brahmana Keling, to help the king Waturenggong, in Bali, to implement the Nangluk Merana Yadnyai ceremony in the Besakih Temple. This ceremony involves a holy sacrifice, intended to pacify all insects so that they may not harm the crops anymore. Keling happily obeyed his father's wishes, as the king was part of his family. As the days set for the ceremony were approaching, the prime minister, Arya Tangkas, was assigned as the head of the ceremony while the king was performing the mute yoga, Monobrata, during which the king is not allowed to talk. Unfortunately, Arya Tangkas did not recognise Brahmana Keling and refused him entry because he did not dress correctly, had a fearsome and ugly appearance and had come to the ceremony without an appropriate ceremonial gift. When Keling explained his intention to meet the king, his relative, he was not believed and people thought that he was crazy; Arya Tangkas commanded the guards to beat him and drive him away.

Keling furiously cursed the ceremony so that it would be unsuccessful. Immediately, plants dried and withered and became infertile, animals became sick, so there was no meat for the ceremony, and numerous people became ill. To remedy this, the king's spiritual advisor requested the king and Arya Tangkas to seek divine guidance; the guidance came and the advisor said they must find Keling and authorise him as the priest of the ceremony; after many elaborate apologies, Arya Tangkas finally won Keling's agreement. Since Keling could remedy the problems and the ceremony was successful, the king awarded him a highly regarded title as Brahmin Sidhakarya and a mask was made in his image. So, that fearsome and frightening mask is still recreated today and still represents the powers of good and evil simultaneously. His character is performed in numerous religious festivals, as it is believed that he can repel malevolent spirits and invite benevolent ones.

His home near Denpasar is also called Sidhakarya village. Even today, numerous important ceremonies must still perform Sidhakarya in Bali, and they require special ritual elements from his village, such as four different colours of rice (*catur bija*), five different woods (*panca taru*) and holy water (*tirta*). The performance of Sidhakarya must also present the three authorities: the king represents Waturenggong, Sidhakarya represents the Buddhist priest – as his father was a Buddhist – and the king's advisor represents the Siwa priest. This is an interesting example of how the Balinese can integrate and accept external religious or cultural influence within their indigenous

belief system; even today Buddhist and Hindu priests perform some ceremonies together.

To explain the role and function of Sidhakarya in a religious celebration, it is helpful to translate the instructions, monologue, dialogue and incantation of Sidhakarya at the beginning of his role:

I appear as Dalem Sidhakarya for I am invoked by . . .

(He names the owner of the ceremony.)

I Sidhakarya will complete the celebration of . . .

(He names the ceremony, for instance, Blessing House.)

That is the reason why I am observing and securing the celebration.

On this auspicious day I begin to perform yoga to initiate the ceremony.

(He is seated facing the sacred space/directional orientation – North or East – with offerings of flowers, food, incense, holy water with Balinese wine and whisky. He spiritually communicates to the Supreme God and the Sanghyang Trisemaya to invoke holy water, which is used to purify the ceremony, and dips the lotus flower in the water to sprinkle on the mask of Sidhakarya three times.)

His main incantation is as follows:

Hail Sanghyang Triodasasaksi and Sanghyang Panca Mahabhuta:  
water, fire, wind, ether, and earth.

You are the ultimate witness and you are the energy of the down-  
middle-higher world and everything inside it.

Please allow me to dedicate these offerings.

I wish the ceremony of (name the owner) to be successful and fruitful.

I ask you the protective gods to bless us with lasting happiness, long  
life, continuously expanding happiness without hindrance; also  
bless our entire family, children, grand-children and great grand-  
children.

If the offering is imperfect we beg your pardon.

We beg you not to bring us bad luck. Here are four kinds of rice and  
Chinese coins in case our offering lacks anything.

Please transform evil spirits into protective, good spirits who can  
contribute long happiness to human beings, freed from sickness  
and dangerous epidemics.

May you grant my prayer.

(He sprinkles holy water through all directions saying):

God please give us long life and enduring happiness without hin-  
drance.

This short opening to Sidhakarya's arrival in the performance clearly sets out the holy purpose behind the performance that will follow. This stays with the Balinese audience until near the end when they anticipate the climax of the final purification ritual by Sidhakarya. Although the audience have witnessed a richly entertaining performance until this moment, the tone transforms as the religious elements begin to dominate. The outside non-Balinese observer will not detect this shift of mood as it is subtle and psychological and communally understood rather than demonstrated. As is true of many Balinese performances, the emphasis within one performance shifts frequently between secular and religious. Perhaps this constantly shifting tone and message has parallels in early Western performance traditions such as Medieval Mystery plays and Greek Tragedy. In Balinese performance aesthetic, technical skill and sacred elements coexist without tension. Although no known connections are documented between Greek tragedy and similar ritual masked performances across South-East Asia, seeing clear parallels and probable links is tempting. Many of the Balinese ritual masked performance elements, including choral chanting, exposition and thematic focus on kingship and the relationships with the gods could well be a route to exploring Greek tragedy and discovering the lost religiously associated processes at work in the plays.

Almost every element and detail of any Balinese performance genre exists for a reason, usually connected to a religious need, or a historical or mythological source. Very little in a performance has been created solely out of an individual whim of creativity. Innovation is always present but a link needs to be made to the past in one way or another. Creativity comes from growth that springs out of an identifiable root. For example, a mythical explanation exists for using the yellow rice in the ceremony. Once upon a time, the demi-god Hyang Sinuhun Kidul wanted to give four different types of rice to humans. He gave four different types of rice to four birds to take down to man: the Sugem, a yellow-coloured bird, was assigned to bring the yellow rice; the Perkutut/Titiran, a red-coloured bird, was assigned to bring the red rice; the Dara, a black-coloured bird was assigned to bring the black rice; and the Kuteh, a white-coloured bird, was assigned to bring the white rice. On the way, a titan named Tumariris wanted to obtain the rice for himself but was only able to grab the yellow rice from Sugem because she flew too slowly. Tumariris ate the yellow rice while Sugem kept only the shell of her rice that looked like seashells. Having heard about the piracy, Hyang Sinuhun Kidul magically transformed the yellow rice shells into turmeric. Four types of rice must be used for the ceremony in order to create human prosperity; therefore, turmeric is used to convert white rice to yellow so the ceremony can still be performed.

During a typical performance, a single male performer plays numerous

characters ranging from clowns and servants through to kings; some characters are female and others have unusual physical characteristics and disabilities. This all allows the performer full scope as he transforms himself physically with each mask he wears. Some half-masks allow speech and some full masks do not allow the performer to speak.

The virtuoso nature of the performance also involves the creation of the narration itself, based around stories from Balinese history and mythology termed Babad. In effect, the entire performance is a one-man show, told only with the use of a basket of masks and wigs brought on at the opening of the performance. The performance involves many rituals, traditions and specific techniques that make up this most dramatic and skill-based form. It also involves the performer having a keen sense of actor–audience relationship, as he will adjust the performance according to the audience response, as he turns and twists facing individuals as he dances and moves around the acting arena.

Although Topeng Pajegan is performed by only one performer, it can virtually depict any story. This unique way of staging a play is worth paralleling with practices in Western theatre. Just as with what can be termed traditional creativity – Kawi Dalang in the Wayang shadow theatre – Topeng also necessitates creativity in plot and manner of presentation. To the outside observer, a performance may look rigidly conformist to a fixed method or technique as with many performance forms throughout Asia, but, in fact, an individual performer has enormous scope to interpret and shape a given performance; the performer's personality is not lost, in spite of the complex, traditional framework within which he operates.

The list of masks/characters mainly used in Topeng Pajegan is as follows:

Topeng Patih Manis	A sweet-natured, refined male character with visible mother of pearl teeth and a tiny moustache. He may be one of the aristocratic knights or a hero, though mostly he is known as a <i>patih</i> (king's assistant) or prime minister. He often appears in the first introductory dance display of characters, <i>panglembar</i> .
Topeng Arya or Patih Keras	A male, powerful <i>gagah</i> (dominant), <i>keras</i> (strong) or <i>kasar</i> (harsh) character that has a thick moustache and bird-like, round eyes. He may be another aristocratic knight or hero in a story, although mostly he is known as a <i>patih keras</i> (king's assistant) or as a prime minister. He often appears in the second

	introductory dance display of characters or as a chief army officer in the story.
Topeng Tua	The character of an old man who usually appears in the third introductory dance display of characters, <i>panglembar</i> .
Topeng Monyer	A self-important male coquette character, who may appear in lieu of Topeng Bues or Bok Gombrang.
Topeng Bues	The character who has a deeply lined mouth.
Bok Gombrang	The character who has heavy, drooping hair.
Topeng Bujuh	The character who has a protruding pointed mouth and often practises boxing.
Panasar Kelihan	An older court attendant who invariably begins the dramatic section, <i>panyerita</i> .
Panasar Cenikan (Karatala)	A younger court attendant.
Dalem Arsa Wijaya	This character always appears as a <i>raja</i> (honourable king) or as a <i>putra</i> (prince).
Topeng Raja Putri	This character appears usually, but not always, as <i>ratu</i> (an honourable queen), though her servants often disobey her, especially when she is used as a bad character.
Pedanda	A priest/holyman, who often uses a walking stick.
Dukuh	A hermit.
Bendesa	An old village leader, who is often funny, mischievous and somewhat disgusting.
Bondres	Various folk characters. Typically a performance has three, four or five. Each has a distinctive physical characteristic and a number of known traits such as a tendency to get drunk, or brag or cheat people.
Topeng Danawa	A demon, <i>serem</i> (frightening or magical) character who has long finger nails and bulging eyes.
Topeng Putri	A princess who is <i>lemuh</i> (gentle), <i>halus</i> (soft), <i>ngenduk</i> (soft) and <i>manis</i> (sweet).

If the need arises, various characters from Topeng Panca could be used in Topeng Pajegan. This formidable cast can be assembled and used to play any story in the Topeng Pajegan canon. However, the same masks/characters could also be used to deal, exceptionally, with new stories from other sources; for example, a foreign narrative. A good example of this is a

performance of *Snow White*, performed by the distinguished Balinese specialist Topeng performer I Nyoman Catra whilst he was lecturing in the USA. He used the masks to both narrate and interpret the story. The choice of masks/characters is itself a statement about his point of view on the story, even before he added the verbal narrative.

The traditional character who begins the dramatic narration is usually Topeng Panasar Kelihan. His mask was chosen to offer the main point of view of the events through the voice of the hunter who was sent by the wicked queen to kill Snow White. The morality of the story is thereby immediately featured at the beginning of the tale as he explains his actions. Topeng Putri, the sweet and perfect princess was, of course, Snow White, the representative of purity. The mask traditionally represents the idealised queen or aristocratic woman, beautiful, clever and refined. As a full mask she can never speak for herself, but is interpreted through the eyes of the dwarfs and other narrators. Topeng Raja Putri, the wicked and selfish coquette mask was used for the evil queen. By selecting this character, I Nyoman Catra knew the audience would laugh at her expense as the vain character preened herself in the mirror to see who is the fairest of all. Cunningly, he chose Topeng Turis, the outsider or tourist, to intervene with different perspectives as the story moved forward. The dwarfs were created through the use of various Bondres, comic-character masks. Each mask has exaggerated features, such as rotten or prominent teeth or a protruding nose, for example, and can therefore lead quickly to comic characterisation. Some examples were Topeng Bondres Bongol, the clever character who prizes Snow White's beauty; Topeng Bondres Gelem, an eternally ill character who comments at length, appropriately, on the death of Snow White after eating the poisoned apple; and Topeng Bondres Canggih, the long-nosed clown dwarf who witnesses the prince kissing Snow White back to life. The other dwarfs could be any one of stock Bondres, each with a specific personality and physical characteristic. In the performance, I Nyoman Catra was able to choose and change the dwarfs at will. Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, he had to deal with the need to end the story with Sidhakarya; for this he decided to make this mask the mirror on the wall and the one who has seen through all the pretences of the queen and her vanity and evil. He has the final word and the final perspective as he comments on what has passed and brings us to the harmonious, happy ending. As always, Sidhakarya leaves the audience with a sense of security and peace.

To understand the staging of Topeng it is essential to understand a number of theatrical and dramatic principles of Topeng performance as part of an overall aesthetic concept and method. The beginner, typically a young boy of six to ten years old, is first taught to master the standard coded body



*Figure 5.3* Topeng performer as Sidhakarya



gestures and movements (dance), song, speech and diction, which will serve as the structural component (acting) in the dramatic expression. It is generally considered that performers reach full maturity in performance skill only after the age of 30. These acting components are designed to build the essence of the standard stock characters rather than a specific dramatic character. The approach is closer to the training for Commedia dell'Arte than other forms of Western training. Western training is more concerned with developing generic emotional and technical skills that later allow the performer to interpret characters that do not specifically belong to stock character types. Hamlet may be a prince, a recognised type in Commedia dell'Arte and Topeng, but it is not stylised, traditional gesture, vocal and movement patterns that will help the actor to play the complexities of the role. Each of those stock characters employs a distinctive set of coded body gestures and other acting components, through which the audience could immediately identify whether it is a male or female of high social status, for example, and, more specifically, which precise character type they are. The actor will work from the outside in, from the character suggested in the details of the mask to the emotional and intellectual details needed to convey that character. The physicality of movement and gesture begins with the same mask and spreads to the body of the actor. In the case of half-masks within which an actor speaks, the diction or voice type then also follows. It is a form of conscious possession, controlled by the actor but dictated by the mask. The character of the old man, Tua, for example, is a non-speaking full-mask performance. The movement is always slow, frail and subtle. The movement is unsteady and often suggests falling forward. However, this old man also often remembers his youth, and his gestures suggest this memory as he tries to be youthful and fails; he wants to dance but cannot. His hands indicate the movements of eccentric patterns of old age as he plucks an imaginary insect from his hair and slowly crushes it between his nails.

Therefore, the performance always belongs to a genre of masked theatre rather than play-based theatre; the performance is identified by the genre rather than by the play. A play is at work in the text and plot details can vary, but this is secondary to the dominance of genre. The performer himself acts as playwright and composes the play for each performance, based around the existing Babad, local chronicle dramatic repertoire. The Topeng performer must use, follow and select a fragment of Babad as the main narrative source and, at the same time, is expected to make an appropriate dramatic embellishment, enrichment and modification as long as the new arrangements do not violate the main source of the existing Babad.

The Balinese term for speech is *wacana*, which can be divided into three sections: the appropriate sequences for speeches, *banda-wacana*; the



dialogue, *kanda-wacana*; and the grammatical level of speech, *antawacana*. The sequence of speech is related to the flow or progression; it is concerned with what must be said and in what order. This is a systematical and chronological verbal structure, an aspect of verbal skill that helps the artist to formulate a clear premise/reason and effect/consequence and conclusion. It is perhaps parallel to some of the notions at work in training in rhetoric in classical Western acting traditions.

However, the most challenging verbal linguistic task in Topeng is concerned with recognition and daily practice of three major speech levels at work in the Balinese language: high, middle and low. The existence of different words with the same meaning must be correctly used by, and addressed to, the right agent. In other words, different social levels of individuals deserve different words according to status; although an alternative word may have the same meaning, it cannot be used if it is not appropriate. A parallel exists with the Japanese language, which has a similar diversity of language according to status: an actor must have a heightened awareness of this. The Western observer rarely understands that the ritual exchanging of name cards in Japan, which is mainly about understanding from the card the status of the other party in order that the correct level of language can be selected. Without this knowledge about status, a real sense of speechlessness emerges because of the fear of inappropriate levels of language. In both cultures, the artist has to be quite familiar with the social status of each character as the basis to select the right word addressed to or by that character. This linguistic hierarchy creates intricate complexity in rendering dialogue for the Balinese. For example, the word 'eat' in high Balinese is *ngajeng* or *ngrayunan*; in the middle Balinese it is *madabar*; and in the low Balinese it is *ngamah*, *ngleklek* or *nidik*. Even more complex is when we realise each level has further sub-divisions. When a servant reports to a priest that the duck is eating, the servant has to use the refined version (because he is talking to the priest) of the low Balinese word for 'eating' (because eating is referring to the duck), which is *neda*. The refined version of the middle level for 'eating' is *nunas*. Similar challenges are present to the *dalang* when creating shadow-puppet performances. Study of language is essential to the developing Topeng performer as much as the classical actor training in the English-speaking world must deal with verse forms and argument. Much of the discussion on language and speech/voice applies to Wayang and Topeng

The Balinese term for diction is *seni suara* or *ucapan*. The diction for Topeng is specified, based on the essence of stock character rather than the character itself; each character has its own distinctive diction or manner and tone of speech. A typical diction (alongside specific body gestures and movements) is appropriate to each character such as a king (*raja*), a prime

minister (*patih*), a prince (*putra*), a princess (*putri*), a demon (*denawa*), a village leader (*bendesa*), a priest (*pedanda*), older court servant (*panasar kelihan*) or younger court servant (*punta, panasar cenikan* or *karatala*), and numerous dictions for comical folk characters (Bondres). If a performer plays a king in Topeng, no matter what the source of the story, whether the king is Lear or Oedipus, the diction and acting style are the same: that of a king. Mastering the basic diction of those stock characters allows a performer to enact any dramatic character of any play. Even performing a Western contemporary play, as in the example earlier of *Snow White*, the Topeng performer would select the nearest appropriate character type.

Stock characters in Topeng have so long been traditionally popular in Bali that ordinary people throughout the island are familiar with the stylistic diction of each character and would instantly know the character from hearing the voice without even seeing the mask. Consequently, the instructor does not need to tell the student which diction belongs to each character or whether they speak quickly or slowly, etc., as they already have this knowledge since childhood. What they need to learn is the way to get there, that is, how to train the voice and what method to use in order to master a large number of very different speech dictions. One method used as a way to begin mastering this rhetorical diction of each character is by deeply studying and then internalising the shape of the mask's mouth, its nose, its teeth, its eye, its gender and then imagining the character's stomach and the general shape of the body. In this way, the performer begins to try to merge the speech patterns with the mask and character to create an organic relationship between them, rather than simply technically mimicking the teacher's voice. Even experienced Topeng performers spend much time holding the mask a few inches away from their own face and staring at it and studying it until they know every nuance of the character within that mask. Teachers tell the students to live with the mask and even sleep with it until they fully know it. This process of identifying with the character is technical and emotional/spiritual.

Topeng and Wayang instructors often tell their students to first free their voices by singing and speaking loudly by a river, a beach or a place close to a waterfall, or by allowing the drops of fountain water to fall over their mouth while yelling to compete with the noise of water by making a gargling-like sound. The main aim of such training is to reach full vocal capacity and increase the voice's volume. No parallel exists in Balinese vocal training tradition with the general Western practices that deal with breathing control, focus on the diaphragm and vocal relaxation techniques; the Balinese training insists on volume and vocal power, appropriate to open-air performance. In performance, the Topeng actor is often competing with the considerable noise of the various ceremonies taking place simultaneously



Figure 5.4 Topeng performer

as he works. The vocal training is the same for Wayang and Topeng and, in Wayang, the *dalang* sometimes performs for nearly three continuous hours, changing from voice to voice without a break. Although Wayang now uses microphones (Topeng does not), the vocal demands are enormous.

Performers practise a number of supportive activities to develop their voices. Some teachers recommend that their students eat a specific *biu kayu* ‘banana wood’, steamed with coconut milk, to remedy and loosen their throats and vocal chords (*pita suara*). Other instructors suggest eating of quantities of papaya and banana and minimising oily foods, sugar and coffee and avoiding the salak fruit as all these are considered bad for the throat and voice. (In the West, similarly, performers often avoid dairy products, especially before singing.) Non-performers often consider Topeng and Wayang students noisy and avoid them because of their custom of shouting and singing as loudly as possible at every opportunity. Western voice coaches, feeling armed by superior science and technique, have often expressed dismay at the training tactics used in Bali and have suggested that they damage the vocal chords, yet loss of voice seems to occur rarely among Balinese performers and the vocal strength exhibited by many seem to match that heard in the West. Perhaps learning could work both ways in this instance and the Balinese approach could be explored?

Many teachers have their own personal approach to teaching diction. One example is the late mask-dancer Ketut Rindha, who used to teach

about four basic voices that belong to the four court servants who always appear in the Wayang shadow-puppet theatre: the fat, black-coloured Twalen, the braggart and pompous Delem, the quick and sharp-mannered Wredah and the ever-sceptical Sangut. These are often known as indigenous Balinese characters, because they do not exist in the source stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, yet they always appear in Wayang performance as servant characters that translate and provide commentary throughout performance. The tones of their voices are associated with the names of four different root plants: Gamōngan, a root similar to ginger; Jaē, ginger; Cekuh, galangal; and Kunyi, turmeric.

The slow, loose, big, low-pitch voice for Twalen should conform to the sound as when pronouncing the word 'Gamōng', a relative of ginger. In another example, the performer can help develop the voice for a character by listening to a related tone in music. The tone of the syllable 'ōng' may be associated with the tone 'Ndong', which is the tone of the biggest key, located on the extreme left of the gamelan gender musical instrument. This tone is also the standard voice for the priest/sage and demonic characters.

The fast, sharp, big, medium-pitch voice for Delem, the servant, should conform to the sound of the word as when saying 'Jaē', ginger. The tone of the vowel 'ē' may be associated with the tone 'Ndēng', which is the tone of the second biggest key, the second key from the left of the same instrument. This tone is also the identifying voice for a grumpy character or soldier; it is also used for puppets with round eyes (*mata deling*).

The fast, sharp, high-pitch voice for Wredah, another servant, should sound like the words 'Cekuh' or 'Kencur', white turmeric. The tone of vowel 'u' in the syllable 'uh' or 'ur' may be associated with the tone 'Ndung', which is the tone of the third biggest key, the third key from the left of the instrument. This tone is also the identifying voice for a character such as the king, Arjuna, Kresna, and other puppets that have tiny eyes.

The slow, loose, high-pitch voice for Sangut, Delem's sceptical younger brother, should sound like the word, 'Kunyi', turmeric. The tone of vowel 'i' in the syllable 'nyit' may be associated with the tone 'Nding', which is the tone of the smallest key, at the extreme right of the instrument. This tone is also the identifying voice for major female characters.

These four tones leave out the final tone, 'Ndang', the fourth key from the left. The majority of folk characters should also be included in defining the basic speech dictions. The priest's assistant, Baru, has a normal speed of speech and pitch which is not shared by the four court servant characters mentioned above. The appropriate voice for Baru is derived from the word *Bawang* (onion). The vowel 'a' in the syllable 'ang' exactly matches the tone of 'Ndang', the fourth key in the Gamelan.

There are five major categories of Balinese song (*tembang*): the *kakawin* (old Javanese poem); the *kakidung* (choir); the *macapat* (Balinese poem); the *dolanan* (lullaby); and the *tetandakan* (narrative music). However, most scholars divide the *tembang* song into four categories, without mentioning the fifth, the *tetandakan*, perhaps because this variant is dependant on its distinctive instrumental musical constituent. The *tetandakan* song only exists when the vocal part is in harmony with the instrumental music. Each category has its distinctive poetic canon, melody, function and linguistic distinction according to the era of its development.

Any category of poetry may be employed in various scenes of the Topeng performance. Of the many divisions of Balinese poetry, the Sinom Lawe is employed most frequently. However, only the *tetandakan* narrative music is fully integrated as the major structural component of the genre, a plural form of the *tembang*.

Based on the interactive manner between vocal arts and instrumental music, the Topeng performance employs three divergent types of musical drama. *Tandak* is a vocal art that embellishes the melody and faithfully merges with or often stays one octave above the pitch/tone of the gamelan instrumental music. In embellishing the melody, the main section of *tandak* can be freely elaborated, but the *tandak* may be concluded a little later than the instrumental in order to expand the last syllable of the song. Although the *tandak* line typically goes one octave above the octave played in the gamelan, the pitch must follow the key played in the gamelan. This type of vocal art is always used for the king's entrance scenes.

*Tampak silir* is vocal and instrumental music that go together simultaneously in terms of melody, tempo, pitch and tone. *Tampak silir* is employed for the entrance scenes of the *Patih*, prime minister.

*Bebaturan* are ornamental vocal arts, which are melodically free from the instrumental music and far more elaborate. Unlike the *tandak* in which the instrumental music is dominant, the vocal element in *bebaturan* always dominates the ostinatic instrumental pieces that build the composition together. *Bebaturan*'s lyrics describe the surrounding situation or mood of a particular character. Therefore, the first four categories of *tembang* are the singing accessories of Wayang, while the last category, *tetandakan*, is an indispensable structural vocal component of the genre. For example, during the entering scene of Wayang Parwa, the performers must sing the *tandak alas arum*.

The briefest sung line, often only a short phrase that precedes the speech of a hero or a king, is known as *Pangalang Ratu*. Although this song is very short, rendered only in a maximum of two breaths, in accordance with the personal style of the performer, the dramatic significance is to give the first clue about the mood and personal identity of the character. The song

concludes with either a rumbling or laughing voice or with coughing and this intensifies and reinforces the tenet of the character before the main speech begins. It works as a message to the audience to tell them what decisions the performer is making about the character.

Performance skills consist of acting technique in movement, speech diction and singing appropriate to a certain character. Similar to other Balinese dances, the vocabulary of movements in Topeng is generally derived from nature: movement of trees and animals, and daily movement behaviour at work and home. These need to be instigated by the traditional dance costumes, the sacred, highly stylised and symbolic gestures used by priests in various religious celebrations and various architectural depictions of human movement seen on statues and carved in rock in many holy places. An important literary source of Balinese dance movements is the *Lontar Panitithalaning Pagambuhan*. According to the late Balinese scholar and performer, I Ketut Rindha, the *Lontar* was written by Goya and Sabda, two of the renowned dancers in Gianyar during the reign of Dewa Agung Made Manggis VII (1856–92). The *Lontar* generally records dance movement used in Gambuh dance-drama, the oldest dance-drama genre in Bali, from which the Topeng's vocabulary of movements is derived.

In terms of acting style, Topeng employs both realistic acting (*loka darmi*) and stylised acting (*natya darmi*). Lower-level characters, especially folk characters, may employ the realistic approach, while characters of higher status may use the stylised movement. Unlike Stanislavskian approaches to acting, the stylised acting of Topeng is based on numerous coded body gestures that represent the essence or a type of a character rather than the dramatic character personally. In this respect, it is close to Commedia dell'Arte, although the same approach in Topeng covers comic and refined, serious characters. The sentiments, mood, emotion and dramatic appearance are manifested in a wide range of coded body gesture and positions that are, in effect, physical symbols.

Broadly speaking, three divisions of coded body gesture exist within this stylistic acting: *agem* (basic position); *abab* (foot movement); and *tandang* (hand movement). Most of the gestures and positions are named according to natural phenomena and animal behaviour. The list of gestures and positions typically taught and rehearsed daily by the Topeng performers is long, and they are transmitted from teacher to student. It takes many years of training before a student can master and remember all the codified gestures, positions and movements.

A Topeng instructor's technical directions to his students during a training session include explaining how to stand up with a firm and precise foot position and how to shift the foot accordingly; how to flex the toes upward; how to turn the knees out, how to bend the knees down or to straighten

them up. The instructor demonstrates each example of the correct position (*agem*), or coded body postures, which the student imitates. In addition to the position, the instructor also directs and gives examples of every single part of the vocabulary of movement. The most essential directions include showing how to lift and put the foot down rhythmically; how to twist the balls of the feet one after another when walking; how to properly shift and place the body weight; how to distribute energy (*bayu*), while drawing in the abdominal area, holding up the chest to make the neck shorter while arching the torso back gently; how to demand that either one of the elbows lead the position by making it higher than the other; and how to execute a sudden movement as a cue for the musician. At this stage, the student imitates and repeats all the instructor's examples. The student masters and emulates the tradition before building his personal style. The instructor provides demonstrations standing in front of the student, always – either facing or with his back to the student. As the student tries to copy the example, the instructor often moulds the student's body by standing behind him and puppeting him, that is, manipulating the student's body like a puppet. To lead the rhythmical movement, the instructor often recites the drum pattern, the basic melody, the beat of gong (*klentong*) or kempur chime. He may clap his hands to complement this vocalised gamelan music recital and to reinforce the appropriate pattern. In addition, the instructor also gives direction from the front using the mirroring technique to be sure the body posture and body weight is on the appropriate foot, either right or left. The mirroring method is essentially employed in teaching the eye-flicking techniques, facial directional orientations and dramatic expressions, incorporated within the choreographic arrangements, such as shifting of positions and spinning. The following are technical movements the instructor teaches using mirroring: foot movements such as twisting, lifting, putting down, stamping on the ground, flexing the toes upward, making hand gestures and jerking or sudden movements at the right moment along with its appropriate dramatic actions. To make the instruction more effective, many dance studios now employ one or more full-length mirrors attached to the walls, in the Western dance tradition. Some instructors, however, do not like this Western addition as perhaps it allows the performer to become self-absorbed instead of focusing on the teacher: significant technical and psychological differences exist between the two systems. Also, the Western performer is keen to personalise at an early point in training, whereas the Balinese counterpart is often more willing to imitate first and master movements or voice techniques before feeling the need to create a personal aesthetic. The personalisation does indeed take place, though, and is as intense and particular as in the West, but it occurs when the performer is more mature and prepared for choices.



The training is tough and demanding. The instructor becomes angry and agitated quickly if the student is unreliable, unfocused, does not practise conscientiously, does not prepare enough or is not fully committed to the execution of every single movement. If disappointed, the instructor may often kick the student's feet when out of tempo or the knees when wrongly placed or by sharply striking the student's elbow when it drifts lazily down instead of remaining rigid and high. Sometimes the instructor places a narrow metre-length rod on the back of the student's neck and forces the student to place his elbows on both right and left sides of the rod. This helps the student learn to raise his elbows to the maximum appropriate position for the strong mask-dramatic characters, but it is also a punishment. Using any mask begins with the student observing it attentively and trying to understand the character reflected in the mask. The student does this by handling the mask and turning it side to side animatedly before putting it on his face. Learning the narrative aspect underlying the construction of each mask can intensify the process of assessing the character. No mask can be used directly without understanding the character and the process of transforming oneself into the mask character. In this process, the actor reconstructs and activates the entire character by transforming himself into the mask character. He does so physically through the rhythm of body gestures, by re-shaping his mouth to match the shape of mouth on the mask, by adding costumes and adopting appropriate movements. He does so mentally through voice, song, spoken and sung dialogue and the appropriate feelings and emotions. The mask cannot be adjusted, and therefore the dancer must adapt himself to match the character of the mask. Working from the outward image in painstaking detail, the performer begins to understand and become the character. When performing in a specific play, however, it is close scrutiny of the story's source texts that gives minute details that shape a particular character performance. This textual scrutiny, searching for character clues, is not so far away from the work of the Western actor analysing a written text. Although the character's mask is, of course, already set, this does not mean (as those who are outside of Balinese Topeng performance often assume) that the character is actually fixed and completely stock. The actor is able to subtly change details within the performance to accommodate full understanding of the narrative detail in relation to tone, character and emotion.

In teaching the vocal dramatic quality or rhetoric, speech and diction of Topeng dance-drama, the instructor usually demands that the students recite and repeat short standard phrases to explore various levels of voice. The student often recites the same phrase many times in fluctuating rhythms, from low to high pitch and from soft to loud (rarely in reversed order) intensity in order to feel the shifting emotions. The instructor also



requires the student to listen or sing selected songs while referring to the character of the mask, explaining the technique and demonstrating the effects. In the early stages of training, the instructor dictates sung and spoken dialogues and all narrative sequences line by line, and the student imitates faithfully, repeating written and recorded lyrics and notes taken on the melody and accompanying explanation. Having familiarised himself with the tradition, the student eventually begins improvising songs based on his own aesthetic impulses.

When experienced teachers or performers watch a Topeng actor, they have very specific criteria for evaluating the performance. They demand and expect precision and a high level of proficiency, regardless of the circumstance of performance. A detailed vocabulary describes the levels attained. These levels or attainments are mainly agreed by all practising artists of Topeng and are, on the whole, not considered to be subjective as in many Western acting traditions. There are frequent competitions of all performance forms throughout Bali as skill levels are continually developed. In Balinese culture, it is important to reach for the highest standards of performance technique, especially of Topeng. The competition culture is continual on the island and involves large numbers of villages and troupes. The judges are distinguished members of the community (a local mayor, for example) and senior performers and trainers. Villagers raise money from their own community as such events are expensive and they also seek sponsorship from local government and private sources. The prizes generally consist of cash, mainly used to build performances for forthcoming competitions. Some competitions are for troupes and others for individuals. The judges of the competition use the following guide to determine the quality of performance of each participant:

- Wiraga* (Literally means physical form.) The stage when a performer masters the vocabulary of movement and memorises the whole choreography of a given dramatic character.
- Wirama* (Literally means musical form.) The stage when a performer masters the musical accompaniment in accordance with the vocabulary of movement and the whole choreography of a given dramatic character.
- Wirasa* (Literally means *rasa* or dramatic taste and emotion.) The stage when a performer masters the *rasa* or dramatic taste and emotion in line with the vocabulary of movement and choreography of a given dramatic character. The *wirasa* in Topeng is primarily based on the enacted play or story.
- Wibawa* (Literally means spiritual aura and value.) The stage when a performer has internalised a certain dramatic character and possesses

the spiritual aura in line with the vocabulary of movement and choreography of a given dramatic character. The *wibawa* is the internal power/values that are widely known as Taksu.

*Wiguna* (Literally means professionalism.) The stage when a performer has achieved full maturity and proficiency in term of *wiraga*, *wirama*, *wirasa* and *wibawa* of performing a given dramatic character; a renowned performer belongs to this stage.

In common with most forms of Balinese performance, there is a complex balance between conventions or rules (*pakem*) and a freedom to explore and adapt or experiment. These are a summary of the essential elements: the preliminary stage offering must be done at the beginning of the show. In terms of the performance structure, the introductory dance (*pangelembar*), displaying two or more dramatic characters, must be done prior to the narrative section, when the story unfolds. Then always follows a court attendant, Panasar, who must precede the appearance of the king or priest. The Sidhakarya mask and blessing must conclude the entire drama.

In terms of the performance techniques, the use of gesture and level of language must follow the established norms. Each character has its own distinctive speech diction and type of words/language. For example, a character in the full-mask that cover the dancer's entire face can only use pantomime, while for the dramatic character with a half-mask, the mouth is visible, uncovered, and he speaks and translates for the full-mask character.

The aristocratic characters are not allowed to employ any realistic approaches to performance, while the folk characters are not allowed to present highly stylistic acting/dance styles. A servant can only speak down to his brother or other folk characters, but must employ gesture and high Balinese words to speak up to his king, prime minister and courtiers. Outside this framework almost everything else is optional/changeable.

A performance on 29 March 2006 in the village of Singapadu demonstrated all these elements at work. The performance took place in the temple of Merajan Anyar as part of the purification of the temple in connection with the celebration of the lunar New Year. From 27 March to 1 April, Bali was filled with temple celebrations and ceremonies. In fact, the evening of this performance was at the same time as the Ogoh Ogoh processions and rituals (described in Chapter 1) taking place all over the island. The performer was I Ketut Kodi, a renowned Topeng performer and son of a well-known mask-maker. Unlike many forms of performance in Bali, specialists mainly perform Topeng, rather than the local village dancer/performers; typically, a performer is hired professionally to perform for the temple. In this case, though, he actually performed in his own village, almost opposite his house.



Figure 5.5 Typical Topeng stage

Before the Topeng performance, the temple is already filled with many villagers and, as is common in many temple celebrations, there will be multiple events concerning worship, ritual and performances, some of them simultaneous. It is this feeling of event, rather than single performance in the Western tradition that is so distinctive of many Balinese performance situations. By early evening, as many people gather within the three temple areas, an all-female gamelan orchestra is performing in the middle temple and a Wayang Lemah puppet has started in the holy, inner temple courtyard. In the outer area, food stalls are doing brisk business. The atmosphere is one of communal celebration, rather than of sober ritual. Back in the inner temple, a group of male villagers chant prayers in another area as female villagers move back and forth carrying and arranging colourful offerings for the ceremony. A riot of colours is everywhere – reds, purples and golds. The Wayang Lemah puppet performance, supported by a small number of musicians, attracts a small crowd of onlookers, but the *dalang* seems oblivious to their responses as the performance is clearly mainly intended for the gods. Elsewhere in the same inner area are elaborate structures (*Paricara*) made of bamboo and palm leaves and decorative coverings designed to attract the evil spirits (*butha*) so they can be dealt with in the purification process. There is a larger version in the middle courtyard, close to where the Topeng performance will take place. Also in the inner area is a large platform, two metres high, on which intricately organised

baskets of offerings are placed. In front of this platform, the villagers all kneel to receive blessings from a priest. At the end of a series of prayers, everyone is blessed with holy water before they head off to witness the events taking place.

In the middle courtyard, the Topeng performer waits to begin his performance. He is already dressed in a typical, magnificent costume. He wears a white sarong made to appear as trousers tapered just below the knees where they are wrapped behind black bands about five inches wide with gold embroidery. The sarong is finished with a tail at the front, long enough to hit the ground, and tucked into the belt at the top. He wears a red belt finished with gold embellishments and decorative stones. On top he wears an outer cape with stripes in red, green, yellow and purple around the back (all with gold patterns overlaid onto the colour). The sleeves are black velvet and his head scarf is white. His shoulder piece is three layers thick in the same colours as the cape. It has orange tassels hanging off of each layer. In the back, it has three curved layers of fabric and then three rectangles hanging horizontally on top of that down the middle of the back. Over that are two, long, pointed rectangles hanging vertically. On the shoulders are two square pieces that are curved at the bottom with orange circles fixed on top.

The *kris* sword protrudes on his right side, under his cape. The main priest is late and the performer cannot start until he comes. In the meantime, he prepares his props. All the materials for the performance are in one large, covered basket that sits on his table in the corner of the courtyard. He takes off the lid and begins to unpack everything needed for the performance. First, he removes the headdresses from the basket and prepares them by placing paper flowers on to two of the headdresses. These are small yellow and white flowers stacked in a tower formation with about five at the bottom, four in the next row, three, two and then one red-and-white flower on top. He carefully places two of these floral towers on each side of the headdresses. Then, he hangs the headdresses from the basket. He hooks the chinstraps of the headdresses onto the basket, so they hang outside the basket. He has two headdresses that are gold and one already has a sash and wig attached. Next, he pulls the wigs out of the basket; there are three, one blonde and two black. Then, he carefully removes the masks from the basket; each mask has been stored in a small, cloth bag. The masks are then set one by one in a specific order, half inside the lid of his basket and half inside the basket. The remaining masks, mainly Bondres (comic characters) are put back in the basket and the lid put back on the basket, as they will not be needed for this particular performance. In effect, the choice of characters – masks – has determined how the narrative will be dealt with for this event: the cast has been chosen and assembled. Finally, a large wooden stick, to be used as a staff for walking with later, is placed next to the masks.

Some villagers grow slightly impatient as the performer must wait by his table and props for the priest to arrive and give the signal to begin. An hour later the priest arrives with a large entourage, many carrying more offerings. As they all sweep past the performer into the inner temple courtyard, he sets about the final preparations of putting on a wig and headdress, the holiest part of the costume. The wig comes first, with long black locks of hair falling around his face; then comes the first mask of the prime minister (chief royal advisor) and on top the elaborate headdress decorated with flowers. Flowers on or near the head are important to the Balinese as they act as a bridge or gateway to the gods. Next, with his back to the growing audience, he makes final adjustments to the mask and headdress in a small, hand-held mirror. These final preparations have the effect of raising the excitement level among some of the onlookers, as they know the performance will soon begin. It is now 8:45 p.m. and many people have been present in the temple for several hours. Some are now attentive, but others continue with their conversations or playing with children around the outskirts of the performance area. Some boys are fiddling with his props as he gestures them to go away.

A drum begins to beat faster and the gamelan orchestra, sitting opposite the performer in the west side of the courtyard and manned by a male team of musicians, builds the tempo. Then the audience sees the performer for the first time with the full-mask and costume facing them as he turns around. He is wearing the mask of Topeng Patih Keras. For the next six minutes he moves around the performance area, a section of the courtyard ten by eight metres in size, moving in various directions, sometimes facing front and sometimes turning around and moving back towards his table. The display of gesture is controlled and elegant, reminding the audience of the aristocratic pedigree of the genre. His fingers move rapidly back and forth and his shoulders remain in an elevated position as he sometimes brushes imaginary hair from off his face and adjusts the mask. The movement around the courtyard is light, as the energy is upward, towards the gods. The boys are sitting near the basket of masks but jump away as he moves towards them as the prime minister nears the end of his aesthetic demonstration of technique, for that is what it is as a prelude to the story that will follow.

After returning to the basket on the table he quickly removes the mask and wig and dons the second, full, non-speaking mask of the old man, Topeng Tua, his back to the audience once again whilst the gamelan orchestra changes to transitional music. Once more he sets off on a ritual display of performance technique as the frail, pale-faced, white-bearded old man takes to the arena. This time the movements are uncertain, frail and more earthbound as the desire to be light is frustrated by the tiredness of

his muscles, as the character moves from one direction to the next. The legs are more bent and the feet turned outward. Throughout this and the former character display, the priest and a group of nine men continue to chant prayers in the inner courtyard area. The old man elicits the occasional smile as he pulls an imaginary object or insect from his hair and drops it to the ground. Then, he gets an idea and starts to shake a bit with excitement. He holds his tail to walk, and holds his hip with his left hand as if to keep balance and steady himself. After walking a few steps, he stops and catches his breath as though it takes a great effort to continue to move. He starts to move a little faster, then closes the cape at the front and walks, turning clockwise, fanning himself with the cape held in his right hand. He stops, and then turns slowly in a circle in the opposite direction. He finds something he does not like on his face and wipes it away. His left hand starts to shake, he hesitates, then turns for the last time and starts moving towards the table again. He turns and puts his hands together as though in prayer and then transforms one hand into a fist and presses it against the other praying hand. The gamelan orchestra pauses for a moment, cued by this gesture, and he turns back and is done as he turns fully away to change masks.

It is now 9:00 p.m. This time he puts on his first half-mask that will allow him to speak, establish the narrative and introduce and explain the speeches and actions of the following character, the king. He establishes the plot and the fact that a great ceremony the king planned is a disaster and has failed. This mask of the male court attendant, *Penasar Kelihan*, is worn with the wig and headdress, whereas later ones are not. As he is changing masks, the ceremony from the inner temple moves into the middle area, near the *Topeng* performer. This procession from the inner temple comes to the *Charu* in the middle of the outer courtyard. With incense and a handful of palm leaves saturated with holy water, the men and priest splash the *Charu*, chanting prayers. The priest speaks, accompanied by a long period of bell ringing. The procession shares the downstage space with the dancer, and holy water is sprinkled on the south-west corner of the ground, before the audience's feet. The procession then leaves the courtyard through the main gate while the *Topeng* performance continues.

The movements of this character are completely different from those of the previous ones. He moves energetically around the arena, sometimes stopping unexpectedly and then moving directly towards sections of the audience that have by now doubled in size. He picks up the tail of the costume and holds it high, speaking out loudly in a high-pitched voice as he begins to explain the story that will follow. Although the sound of the speech is not natural to a Western ear, and is clearly exaggerated, the movement and gesture style, in comparison to the highly stylised manner of the

two earlier characters, is in essence close to a realistic mode of performance. This is all part of the extraordinary mastery of technique that the performer is keen to demonstrate. His gestures are animated and jerky as he wags his finger at the audience as he builds momentum in the storytelling. Sometimes, he cues the orchestra with gestures as he choreographs his journey around the stage. He adjusts the mask frequently as his body twists from side to side as he takes in the audience that are all around him. After a while, he sits on the ground, cross-legged, facing the entrance to the temple as he continues his story to a mainly attentive audience, although some of the villagers talk and move around the outskirts of the performance. As his introduction to the story is complete, he rises and heads abruptly back to the mask table and changes to the character of King Waturenggong, with a male, refined mask. This mask is all white, and the face has fine features that are completed by a distinguished-looking moustache.

He places his hands together and then slowly moves them apart and then the left hand faces down and the right hand faces up in balanced opposition, close to the arrangement of arms on the swastika. The hand and body movements are extremely delicate and refined and the direction of movement upward. Then his left hand moves to his chest and his hands come together again as his head tilts slightly side to side as he walks forward. This character has rapidly moving fingers, especially on the left hand. He lifts up his cape with both hands and then drops the left hand and keeps the cape in his right hand, high up, as though suggesting preparation of a coat for a journey. He moves in a circular pattern showing all the surrounding audience his movement and gestures. He shakes his head as he moves about the space and the towers of flowers on his headdress seem to gently dance. He then seizes the cape again with both hands, moves around and exits towards the mask table.

The next mask is for the character of the Sage Markandeya, presented with a Pedanda priest/holyman mask; the mask has a pointed chin, beard, dark skin and a high headdress. The hat is black with three gold bands around it. There is a small shiny object on top of the hat and a gold section with mirrors at the bottom, in the front and on the sides. Again the movement is completely altered as he walks about, supported by the stick that had been placed by the baskets before the performance. His movement is always in large circles, first in one direction and then in reverse, with his position often very close to the audience this time. He addresses the audience very directly, sometimes staring right into their faces, forcing them to pay attention, as he tells them how the king must send someone to find the Brahmin Sangkya from Madura who has left the city, offended by his treatment. He must return if the ceremony is to be rescued. In the background, the voice of the priest can be heard over loudspeakers, conducting the



ceremony from the inner courtyard. The performer gestures to the orchestra to pause and the Topeng performer once again heads to the table to change.

The next mask is a Bondres, Topeng Bendesa, comic character, half-mask decorated with an old back-and-white checked cloth on top of the head; this time there is no decoration of flowers or other ornamentation. He is the village leader who wants everyone to know he comes from a family of artists and also says how he will assist in the journey to find the Brahma. He begins with parading ostentatiously around the arena in a large circle and then is about to commence speaking when some villagers cross through the acting area. He immediately improvises and teases them to the delight of the whole audience. The character is earthy and raucous as he improvises jokes in a comic, high-pitched voice, slapping his thigh after punch lines and raising the energy level of the audience through this sudden and surprising use of humour. The Western observer may think that ritual and stylisation have been replaced abruptly by stand-up comedy. The extraordinary deftness of the transition of body language, emotion, vocal range and style epitomises the virtuoso performer at work as he finishes a further series of jokes and narrative and quickly changes masks again to another Bondres, half-masked speaking character.

This time he dons a mask, Bondres Canggih, featuring prominent teeth and a high, pointed nose, the picture completed by a black beret. He begins the performance by making two large self-important circles around the arena, looking at the audience and employing yet another voice; this voice is louder and deeper than the last as he picks up the story from the previous character and explains how the story ended happily after the people had apologised to the Brahma and he came back to conduct the ceremony. He also pompously stresses his own role in the process and how he commanded everybody to do their duty. It is as though a baton is being passed from mask to mask as the narrative is communicated from different perspectives according to the role of each participant in the events. However, this time the performer stops abruptly after only a few minutes, returns to the table and begins another transformation. Later it transpired that the priest, who had begun all the proceedings late because of his delayed arrival, had now decided it was time to bring everything to an end and therefore asked the performer to move immediately to the conclusion of the performance with the mask of Sidhakarya, the purifier of the ceremony. Later, in a private discussion, the performer, I Ketut Kodi, expressed some disappointment at having to curtail the performance, but accepted the needs of circumstances without ill feeling.

The priest and huge numbers of villagers pour into the middle courtyard as the performer carefully puts on the mask, white-haired wig and floral decoration behind the ears. The mask is handled as though it is a delicate



and precious object as it is adjusted into place. At its appearance, children squeal nervously and hide underneath a platform or run to parents for cover; everyone in the now very crowded courtyard is looking for a place to sit. There is hardly a place left for the performer to stand or move. He calls out in a powerful voice, waves his hand above his head to cue the gamelan orchestra and makes his way through the throng to the steps of the entrance to the inner temple; on his way he picks up incense to take with him. At the top of the steps he is blessed with holy water by the priest and throws rice and holy water towards the shrine. He bows his head and prays, turns around and exits the inner temple. He calls out briefly at the top of the stairs to the kneeling worshippers in front of him. Then he walks along the side of the middle temple and back to his masks. The performance is over and the usual rituals at the end have been highly shortened, possibly to the relief of the anxious children who are usually quick to run away as he reaches for one of them to bless with Chinese coins. The priest and his assistants bless the numerous sitting villagers with holy water. The evening is over as the Topeng performer gently removes his Sidhakarya mask and carefully places it back in a special, protective-material bag.

Two days later I Ketut Kodi performed a master-class demonstration performance for an audience of leading Balinese academics and performers at ISI Denpasar Institute. During this performance, using the same narrative, he added several Bondres masks and completed the end rituals. In addition, all the movement and text sequences were greatly extended and long comic interludes interspersed. Either performance could be considered typical as all is dependent on time, place and circumstance. In each situation, the basic storyline and structure became a vehicle for performance, rather than an end in itself. In both cases, the highly skilled performer was able to demonstrate a mastery of technique and content that is dazzling to witness; that is the art of Topeng Pajagan.

## 6 The future

Performance culture in Bali, at present and for the foreseeable future, faces many challenges. Tensions do exist, as they do in most parts of Asia, between those who embrace fully the incoming influences of globalisation and those who protect the present and past. Bali is not a stranger to outside influence and the present-day, rich tapestry of Balinese art and culture is composed of elements from Animism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, the Majapahit kingdom, China, Holland and India. History indicates waves of migration into the Indonesian archipelago from multiple origins involving numerous cultures, East and West. With multi-, cross-cultural artistic origins, Bali is in the middle of a rapidly changing and potentially difficult geopolitical situation and some are nervous about how this will develop. At the time of writing, Bali has already suffered a second bomb attack and tourism is again in a state of semi-collapse; it is not clear how long this will last. The Australian government warns its citizens (a major tourist source for Bali) not to visit and a number of other governments advise great caution. This could turn out to be a minor problem in a long-term context, but most Balinese believe that serious problems lie ahead.

Bali is very much caught up in the global tensions involving Islamic militancy; as the only Hindu island within a majority Islamic nation, the Balinese feel vulnerable. In recent years, Bali has been recognised as an important magnet for foreign tourism and income for Indonesia and it is understood that much of that draw is the unique culture, strongly represented in performance arts. Consequently, a policy of protecting cultural tradition and encouraging tourist development is in place. However, some forces in Indonesia do not approve of the development of part of the nation in a way that is separate to the mainstream Islamic point of view. In other parts of Indonesia, East Timor (now independent) and Aceh, underlying tensions (although in many ways politically very different to the situation in Bali) have led to direct conflict. However, Bali has remained peaceful and, it seems, relatively at ease with the continuance of its own culture within

Indonesia as a whole. The recent bombings have brought a new and worrying concern to the issue as that, in part, an attack was declared on Bali because it is a gateway to Western influence and is not Islamic. The radical movements within Indonesia may increase in influence and that might have an impact on the way the Balinese respond. It is often said that cultural practices are so important to the way of life, that a threat against culture, if it developed, would be a serious threat to the Balinese way of life as a whole; that in itself could destabilise the island. Contemporary Balinese performance is filled with references to these issues, some comic and satiric and others serious and politically motivated, as the debate rages about how people should act and respond.

However, this is not the place for guessing political futures, but for trying to understand how performance might change and evolve in the foreseeable future. The other main tension concerns the growing Western influences, mainly through media and technology. Electronic media have of course affected Bali, but the impact on local culture does not yet seem to be overwhelming. Balinese performance has retained a strong identity and although new sources for narrative have been adopted, adapted and evolved, the traditional source stories still hold sway. This is because of the entanglement between religion and performance as described throughout this book. As long as religious and community life remains tightly knit, the cultural output is not likely to change significantly and the Ramayana, Mahabharata and local chronicles will presumably remain as the main texts, continually re-interpreted and modified according to the newly fluctuating context. Bali is also different from many other parts of Asia in that it is a small island and does not have a major metropolitan centre that would act as a magnet for young adults within easy reach. In many other countries, the community bonds are damaged by the tendency for young people to move to cities, but in Bali the biggest town is Denpasar and there is little there to lure young people in terms of opportunity or employment. The alternatives are cities such as Jakarta, but the religious and social environment makes the option less attractive; the fact of Bali being an island is, therefore, a form of cultural protection.

The influence of Western music, pop culture, movies and videogames has had an impact but, on the whole, this has not yet infiltrated much into Balinese performance tradition. There are frequent experimental performances that explore this territory, but generally this takes place in student environments. Groups of performers do experiment with foreign performance forms, such as contemporary Western dance, but these have so far existed alongside traditional forms and are not seen as a threat. Also, as described in relation to the Wayang Kulit case study (see page 23), some Western technology has been adopted in various performance genres.

However, some more conservative performers and critics are more concerned about the secondary, more subtle effect of some of these influences. They feel that the gradual move to secularisation of society in general has created an interest in performance more as an immediate entertainment, similar to the sensation of seeing a movie, cable television or a pop video and has thereby created pressure on performers, *dalang* and others to simplify dramatic structures, minimise spiritual messages and substitute effects for technique. In Wayang Kulit, for example, the more traditional performers bemoan specific changes that some younger *dalang* are implementing. Some specific examples are as follows:

- 1 Many contemporary *dalang* change the status of a certain aesthetic components from required to optional. The *rebong* love scene is now optional and often substituted with the *ragragan* comic interlude, although the *rebong* was always a traditionally a requirement. All the traditional sad scenes that were always required are now sometimes cut completely.
- 2 Some *dalang* now transform the *genjekan* drunken-folk dance into the general plot of a Wayang love scene. This change allows the *dalang* puppeteer to assign the love scenes to the comic servants and then present it in any part of the performance, regardless of what story is selected and performed.
- 3 Transferring the love scene from noble characters to the comic servants allows the artists to include numerous sexual jokes that their audiences respond to enthusiastically.
- 4 Instead of remaining faithful to traditional methods in which one *dalang* recites all the songs, more than one female singer is now assigned to recite/sing certain sections songs. The monophonic choir, in which a *dalang* recites the Tampak Silir aria, is now replaced by the *gerong* choir of several singers.
- 5 There is a tendency to minimise the use of archaic Sanskrit and Old Javanese Kawi language: instead of speaking in Kawi that traditionally links the story to the ancient past, a king may speak in the vernacular language and leave no opportunity for the comic servant to translate the discourse.
- 6 The simultaneous use of stylistic puppets and realistic scenery elements creates a disharmony of effect, and some believe it limits the imagination and dilutes the more symbolic values and associations of meanings being communicated to younger audiences.
- 7 All these shifts contribute to the shortening of overall performance times, to suit changing audience tastes, especially those of the younger members.

Similar examples could be found for the other major performance genres (as already explored in Chapter 2, see page 11). In Bali, though, there is a continual, lively debate about the positive and negative effects of these changes. It is accepted that all forms of performance will change, but the debate centres on how much and to what end. A constant flux is accepted throughout Balinese culture. The influence of globalisation, consumerism and realism is ubiquitous in the continuity and change of Balinese performance art genre of the secular forms, ceremonial forms and even in the sacred trance religious forms. The transgression from ritual to theatre, artistic to comic, devotion to commercial, spiritual edification to temporal sensation permeates all genres of Balinese performances. However, the Balinese are very conscious of the importance of performance culture within the culture as a whole and the debates are passionate in tone. Although all these shifts are invisible to the outside eye, the Balinese feel them keenly.

The increasing tourism is also an issue as, in some ways, since the 1930s, tourism has helped to develop and protect much of Balinese performance culture. Since the Dutch recognition of Bali as a tourist paradise and the independent Indonesian governments concern to continue that image, income from tourism has in part been channelled back into preservation and archival projects connected with performance. The growth of the two schools mentioned in Chapter 1 is linked to this same desire to preserve and develop. The recent loss of tourism since the two bombings has been painful for many performers related to the tourist industry. Tourism has provided an income for many and that is crucial in any society for performance genres to survive and flourish. Without employment opportunities, a career as a performer is unattractive to the young and, as has been seen across much of Asia, traditional genres vanish rapidly when economic realities are too harsh. However, at the same time, it is tourism that provokes frequent secularisation of performance forms as performers leave the temple environment and the accompanying spiritual connotations of performance in order to perform in hotels, restaurants and specially built tourist theatre spaces. Careful management of tourism is, therefore, essential if Balinese performance is to continue to flourish.

On the whole, there is evidence in Bali, in spite of the robustness of performance culture, that a gradual decline in interest from the Balinese themselves is taking place. The artists and performers know that they face an uncertain future and struggle to ensure that traditional values, techniques and spiritual meaning are nurtured alongside new developments. The Balinese do not fear development or change, but they do need to preserve their traditions. Performance culture is a deeply ingrained part of Balinese life and religion and its longevity is likely to continue. During a lecture in 2006 to visiting theatre directors from the UK, I Made Bandem, one of

the most distinguished performers, writers and academic critics in Bali, expressed his sadness at the day his daughter declared to him that she was not going to follow the family performance career, but had decided to become a doctor; it is easy to imagine a similar response in the West from a parent who learns that her daughter wants to become a dancer! The Balinese feel cautious towards the creeping commercialisation of performance, but they acknowledge that idealism and survival need to stay balanced. Balance, though, is something that the Balinese know all about.

# Travel advisory

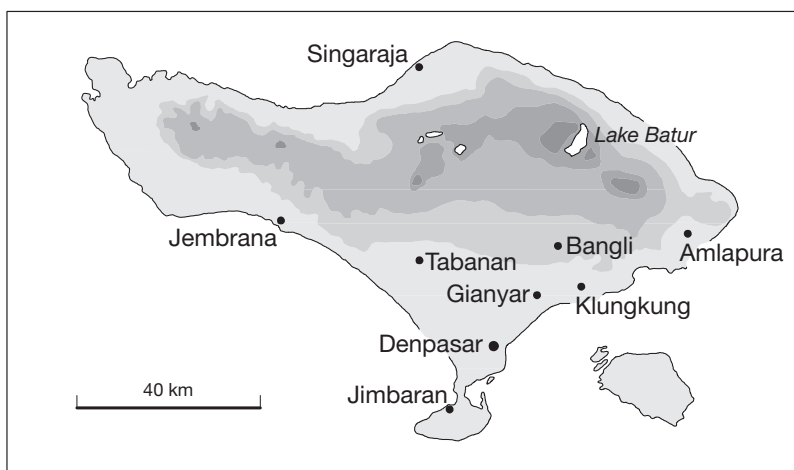
Reaching Bali from any starting point in the world is easy, as frequent daily flights fly in and out of Denpasar, the capital. However, Denpasar is not an attractive city, unlike the rest of the tropical and beautiful island. The culturally inclined traveller would probably seek to be based in Ubud, the arts hub of Bali where many artists of performance, literature and fine art live and work. As the distances are small and almost anywhere in the island can be reached within a few hours car or bus travel, any other village can also serve as the traveller's base.

Like the island in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Bali is 'full of noises, Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not'. Everywhere a visitor might venture, they will hear the gentle sounds of gamelan floating through the trees as local villagers practise their art. Almost everyone is an artist in one way or another in Bali. The waitress at the restaurant where a visitor might eat is likely to be rehearsing a dance behind a door during a quick break, as much as children will rehearse musical themes on gamelan instruments at the village hall in the evening. This view of Bali is not romanticised; it is real. Those not performing are often elaborately designing temple decorations and presentations of offerings and many others draw, paint, make jewellery or carve. A visitor cannot fail to see deeply rooted cultural practice throughout their time on the island.

Frequent tourist performances of specific genres are performed throughout the year; these are advertised in the main tourist areas such as Sanur, Kuta, Seminyak and Nusa Dua. Students from the ISI Denpasar Institute often give performances at hotels and restaurants in the same areas. Throughout the year there are frequent special events involving processions and performance and sometimes these connect to weddings or funerals and other major, social and religious events. Performances and exhibitions are often held at the Taman Budaya Art Centre in Denpasar that are advertised publicly. However, for the serious student of Balinese performance seeing a full range of the best work that Bali has to offer is more difficult, as the

vast majority of work is performed as part of or in conjunction with temple ceremonies. Although these are frequent and can be found all over the island, they are generally not advertised, although outsiders are warmly welcomed. The visitor needs to continually ask the local Balinese where they are staying, rather than rely on tourist agency advice. No admission charge applies, but visitors are expected to wear correct temple costume of a sarong, belt and lace top for females and two sarongs, belt and headdress for males (easily and cheaply bought in shops or markets). Information is unreliable, largely because of the complexity of the calendar (explained in Chapter 1, pages 9–10), and cross-checking among several informants is recommended. Without appropriate clothes, it is not possible to enter the inner temple, in particular, where many fascinating performance-related activities are situated.

When planning a visit specifically to witness many performances, including a full moon or dark moon day in the choice of dates is a good idea, as numerous temple activities revolve around the lunar calendar. One of the best times of year for visits is around the lunar New Year period, Nyepi. The main annual event that guarantees a rich array of performances is the annual Bali Arts Festival that has taken place since 1979. In addition to traditional performance, the festival also hosts innovative and newly developing work of all kinds.



Map of Bali