

NGGÊNDHINGI

THE AESTHETICS PEAK OF SOLONESE KARAWITAN

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Abstract

Nggêndhingi is a musical aesthetic concept that serves as a benchmark for the quality of musical presentation and musicality in Javanese karawitan. The concept of *nggêndhingi* can be observed in karawitan presentation events, especially in *klenengan*. There are two aspects to achieving the quality of *nggêndhingi* interpretation and musical interaction. Both are important competencies that must be performed by the pengrawit simultaneously when presenting the music. Interpretation is how the pengrawit interprets or translates the musical language through the instrument, while musical interaction is how the pengrawit interacts with other pengrawit so as to build unity and balance. Musical interaction in karawitan is commonly referred to as *mat-sinamatan*, the awareness to listen and respond to each other. Unity in karawitan is called *rampak*, while balance is called *rêmpêg*. There are three basic concepts used by pengrawit in interpreting music: *niteni*, *niru*, and *ngembangne*. The interconnectedness of interpretation and musical interaction will create an aesthetic called *nggêndhingi*. This study employs qualitative techniques and an emic phenomenological approach. Emic refers to from the perspective of the subject being studied, i.e., adhering to the values of the culture's creator or supporting community. The conclusion of this paper shows that *nggêndhingi* is an aesthetic concept as the peak quality of musicality in Solonese karawitan.

Keywords: *Nggêndhingi*; *Musical Aesthetics*; *Javanese Gamelan*

1. INTRODUCTION

Javanese gamelan is one of the regional cultural goods that is also a part of Indonesia's regional wisdom product. Gamelan in Java is renowned for its great aesthetic value, or *adiluhung* [1]. As a manifestation and crystallization of the aesthetic sense of the Javanese community, Karawitan is a component of Javanese culture that was created in response to the requirements and desires of the supporting community for the aesthetic sense of music [2]. Solonese karawitan has a number of terms to refer to the aesthetics of musicianship and vocal performance, including *apik*, *péni*, *rêsik*, *pénak*, *ngês*, *nyamlêng*, *alus*, *brêgas*, and so on. These expressions can be understood as assumptions, judgments, or satisfaction generally expressed by listeners or audiences when watching or listening to a piece of music, including a teacher's assessment of his or her students. Expressions of judgment on the quality of the music always refer to the names of the instruments and vocals and to musical issues (rhythm), as follows: "*rebabane alus*; *kendhangane brêgas*; *sindhenane nyamlêng*; *genderane resik*; *bonanange apik*; *iramane penak*; and *suarane péni*. The word "*rebabane*" refers to the playing of the rebab; "*kendhangane*" to the drumming; "*suarane péni*" means the vocals are good or melancholy; "*iramane penak*" means the tempo is just right, according to the character of the music and the context of the music presented. For example, the tempo of the music for *klenengan* is different from that of dance music and different for wayang kulit performances.

The fact that assessing the quality of the music in Solonese karawitan is not as simple as it sounds. The expression *apik*, or good, for the karawitan masters, is not necessarily

considered the best quality. This means that there is still a higher level of quality than the term *apik*. As found in the reality of daily practice, gamelan teachers, *empu* karawitan, or elders once commented as follows: "*Rebabane apik ning kurang nggêndhingi*", meaning: the *rebaban* is good but lacks *nggêndhingi*. "*Suarane apik ning ora nyindheni*". Meaning: "The voice is good but not *nyindheni*". "*Kendhangane apik, trampil ning durung nggêndhingi*". This means that the drumming is skillful but not yet *nggêndhingi*. The term *nggêndhingi* comes from the root word "gending", which refers to a Javanese musical composition. A drumming or *sindenan* that is considered *nggêndhingi* means that the quality is not just good, but the playing is felt (Javanese: *krasa*) *penak* (good) and can bring the flavor of the music to life. *nggêndhingi* is also related to the feeling of the *pengrawit*. Feeling is the main meaning. As 'feeling,' it alludes to both emotional sentiments as well as the physical senses of taste and touch. *Rasa* is another word for "mean" [3].

Nggendingi comes from the word *gending*, which means a musical composition of Javanese karawitan [4]. The term *nggêndhingi* has the same meaning as in *rebab*, called *ngrêbabi*; *kendang*: *nggêndhang*; *gender*: *nggênderi*; *bonang*: *mbonangi*; and *sinden*: *nyindheni*. *Ngrêbabi*, from the root word *rebab*, is an expression of assessment of the quality of *rebab* playing, which is considered to have reached the highest level in *rebaban* aesthetics. Likewise, the term *nggêndhang* is used to refer to the aesthetic quality of *kendang* instrument; *nggênderi* for *gender* instrument; *mbonangi* for *bonang* instrument; and *nyindheni* for *sinden* vocals. When a *rebab* player is said to be *ngrêbabi*, it means that his *rebab* is no longer just *pleng* (right tone or arrangement), skillful, or good, but also has been able to bring life to the *gending* being played. As per the *empu*, *gending* is believed to have *yatmaka*, the spirit or soul, and *rebab* is placed as the *pamurba* (leader) of *yatmaka*. The *kendang*, when said to be *nggêndhang*, is no longer *nggêndhang* "playing" the form of the music but *nggêndhang* *gending*, which means that it has been able to bring the music to life (Javanese: *nguripne*) according to its character. Javanese *gending* characters include *regu*, *sereng*, *sedhik*, *prenès*, *bérag*, and *gecul* [5].

2. METHODS

This research uses a phenomenological approach, which is "emic" in nature. "Emic" means from the point of view of the person being studied. It is to follow the views of the supporting community or the owner of the culture. In this case, the practitioners of karawitan, namely *pengrawit*. This research is a field study that seeks to describe and characterize the knowledge and views of individuals and groups from a particular community (karawitan). There are several ways to achieve this endeavor. The first step is to position music (karawitan) as a text. As in the hermeneutical approach, anthropologists consider art as a text. A text is something that must be read and then interpreted. This is also the case with art (music). In this perspective, music is something that must be "read" and "interpreted" [6].

3. DISCUSSION

Interpretation and musical interaction in Javanese karawitan are two things that form the foundation of a musical structure. This is because they are the essence of Javanese musicianship to achieve the quality of beauty expected by the *pengrawit* (musicians) themselves and for the listeners. Ben Brinner lists four elements of *pengrawit* interaction in playing gamelan: norms, auditory filtering, experienced listening disparities, and finally the connection between interpersonal and cognitive listening [7].

Gending in the musical world has become a common term and is also very popular. The term *gending* is usually used in the designation for musical composition [8]. The music is only realized when it is played by the *pengrawit*, so that the music can be enjoyed or lived as it should be. In this case, the *pengrawit* is the main actor who determines the process of

interpretation and musical interaction. Interpretation is about how the composer translates or interprets the music through their instruments. Musical interaction is a matter of penguins awareness to listen to each other. Interpretation and musical interaction cannot be done partially or sequentially, but simultaneously and horizontally. This means that the processes of interpretation and musical interaction occur simultaneously when the composer presents music.

Aesthetically, performance in Central Java places a great priority on player interaction, adaptability to performance circumstances, and the potential for independent interpretation within certain parameters [9]. Pengrawit in interpreting or translating "traditional" gending cannot be separated from conventions, i.e., rules or regulations, and values or norms that apply in the Karawitan community. For example, when a pengrawit presents the gending *Bondhet*, although the *pathet* of the gending is *slendro sanga*, the *pathet manyura* is dominant. If the music is performed in full *slendro sanga*, it would be misinterpreted as it does not conform to traditional conventions. The *Laler Mengeng* is one of the minor pieces, and if the musician tries to work on the minor piece, the result is that the pesindhen will become confused and the characteristic of the piece will be lost. Interpretation is not only a matter of song and rhythm; it can also take the form of technique. Technique in this discussion can be understood as the way pengrawit presents his instrument. For example, when playing gender, if the gending is still *merong* (the initial part after the opening of the gending), use *laku papat* with the *kembang tiba* technique. When the music enters the *inggah* section with *ciblon* drumming, the technique changes to *ukel pancaran*. However, even in the *inggah* section, if the musician interprets the music using *kosek alus* (with *kendang ageng*), the *genderan* technique is still *laku papat*, like the *dadi* rhythm *genderan*. Gender players who misapply the technique, for example, when the *merong* is already using *ukel pancaran*, will be considered inappropriate. In other words, the interpretation is not *mungguh*.

3.1 Interpretasi Musikal

Musical interpretation is a manifestation of pengrawit's knowledge in translating or interpreting a music. As we know, gending is a musical structure that requires interpretation or reworking every time it is presented. Therefore, musical interpretation can also be understood as the actions of pengrawit in working on or processing the music. How a pengrawit works on a piece of music is an interesting issue to know. In this regard, karawitan teachers or *empu* often state that "*ilmune wong nabuh kuwi mung niteni*". This means: "the knowledge of people playing gamelan is only *niteni*". *Niteni* in karawitan culture can be understood as the consciousness of the pengrawit to remember or memorise the elements of musicality.

For pengrawit and students who are learning karawitan, *niteni* is considered a simple way to work on music. The basic things that need to be understood and remembered are the elements of musicality, including *garap gending*, *lakune* (presentation) *gending*, *balungan* model, *cengkok mati*, rhythm-tempo presentation, and so on. In addition to the concept of *niteni*, there is also the term *niru* (imitating) or *ngeblat* (modelling) from what has been done by previous the pengrawit. *Niru* can be in the form of the *wiledan* (development) of each *cengkok* or *sekar* in certain instruments. For example, *sekar* *bonangan*, *wiledan* *rebab*, *wiledan* *kendhang*, *wiledan* *genderan*, and so on. After *niru* or *ngeblat*, the pengrawit also has freedom. In their interactions, the pengrawit sometimes also use *kupingan* techniques. This aims to provide an integrated, holistic, dynamic, coherent, and unified gate [10].

3.2. Musical Interaction

Interaction in a musical culture that adheres to a group work system is one of the important musical elements. This can be understood considering that through interaction, a

unified network or weaving of instruments can be formed that complement, balance and harmonise each other so that it can emit a certain aesthetic impression. The archipelago's musical culture, which adheres to a group work system, usually has its own term to refer to the concept of musical interaction. In Javanese karawitan, musical interaction is synonymous with *mat-sinamatan*, the ability and awareness to hear and respond to each other.

Musical interaction is a manifestation of the pengrawit's awareness of togetherness, and understanding of each other. In musical interaction, besides *mat-sinamatan*, it also needs to be supported by tolerance. In Javanese culture, this is called *tepa salira*. Musical interaction is an important aspect that can strengthen the building of a music. The ability of pengrawit to interact musically is a musical sensitivity that cannot be acquired instantly. This is because the ability is related to taste, which can be formed through a process of sufficient time.

4. Conclusion

Interpretation and musical interaction can be understood as the foundation and pillar in pengrawit's efforts to realise the quality of *nggêndhingi*. Both can be seen as musical elements that must be played by the artist (pengrawit) himself. However, there are also non-musical factors that can support the quality of *nggêndhingi*, among others: psychological factors or moods when the pengrawit plays the music, experience, familiarity (*pakulinan*), and the situation of the audience when the pengrawit presents the music. In order to achieve the quality of *nggêndhingi*, there are several elements and conditions that must be fulfilled. The first is musical interpretation, and the second is musical interaction. Both are the main ingredients for building the quality of *nggêndhingi* in Solonese karawitan, as illustrated in the following model.

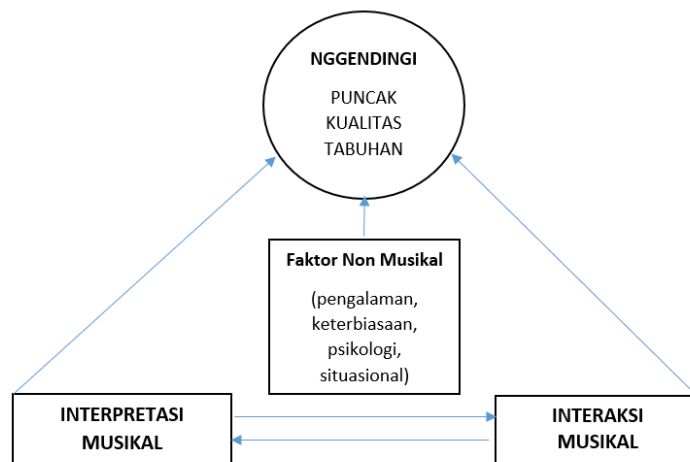


Figure 1. Model the concept of *nggêndhingi* in Solonese Karawitan

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