

IN MEMORIUM

HARDJA SUSILO (1934 – 2015)

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HARDJA SUSILO (3 December 1934 - 25 January 2015), a native of the royal city of Yogyakarta on the island of Java in Indonesia (then the Netherlands Indies), was the 7th of 11 children. At the age of 3 his family moved to a compound near the sultan's palace, where he soon became exposed to *gamelan* music and court dance. He began studying Javanese music and dance when he was about 11 years old, although his father tried to discourage him. As a student at Gadjah Mada University (*Universitas Gadjah Mada*), Sus (as he was affectionately called by everyone who knew him) found a copy of the dissertation on Javanese musical modes written by Mantle Hood, who had completed his doctorate in 1954 in the Netherlands under Jaap Kunst. Hood had joined the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Music Department in 1954 and was visiting Yogyakarta in 1956, where he met Sus and invited him to study as well as teach Javanese music and dance at UCLA in 1958. Sus received his BA in 1961 and his MA on Javanese drumming in 1967 from the Institute of Ethnomusicology, which was created in 1960 at UCLA. That year he danced with the Javanese ensemble that had been formed in 1954 by Hood. With his beautiful voice and falsetto range, Sus also performed as a vocalist in the UCLA mariachi band and was often mistaken for being Mexican. He also played in the university's Veracruz harp ensemble.

Sus was the first Javanese *gamelan* and dance teacher in the USA. From 1967-1970 he directed *Kyai Mendung* (Venerable Dark Cloud), the Javanese *gamelan* at UCLA which Hood had purchased in 1958 through a Rockefeller Foundation grant. Sus was a guest dancer and musician at Wesleyan University in Connecticut in 1967 when the Javanese *gamelan Kyai Muncar* (Venerable Sparkling One) was received after the 1964 New York World Fair, where it was played in the Indonesia Pavilion. In 1968 when William Malm helped purchase the Javanese *gamelan Kyai Telaga Madu* (Venerable Lake of Honey) for the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, Sus was invited to give intensive training in music and dance to the ensemble and its leader, Judith Becker.

In 1970 Sus moved to Honolulu, his permanent adopted home, to teach at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa (UHM) Music Department which had just acquired *Kyai Gandrung* (Venerable One in Love), a royal *gamelan* from his home city, through the efforts of ethnomusicology faculty Barbara Smith who established the program in 1960, and Ricardo Trimillos, a graduate of the program in 1964 and who knew Sus at UCLA when they were studying there. In 1973 Sus led a group of UHM students on a study abroad program in Yogyakarta, which he did again in 1975; a small third group went without him in 1979 but with his full support. Several of these participants are still active in the *gamelan* group in Hawaii and in many other places around the world. While teaching at the UHM, Sus produced Javanese *gamelan* concerts twice a year with his students, and full Javanese dance-dramas every few years.

In 1975 Sus collaborated with UHM Department of Music faculty member Neil McKay in composing "Parables of Kyai Gandrung", a 25-minute concerto in 4 movements for the university's *gamelan* and the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra. The piece was commissioned by the Honolulu Symphony Society and was premiered in 1976. Sus contributed to the *Gamelan* Listserve on the internet, sharing his wonderful memories and broad knowledge. In 1983 he helped to produce a video on Javanese *gamelan* music through the East-West Center. Sus wrote a number of enlightening articles and essays with keen insights on Javanese music, dance, puppetry, and performing arts for encyclopedias, journals, and books. He also was interviewed by other writers. Among his articles are:

Music of the Venerable Dark Cloud: The Javanese *Gamelan Khjai Mendung*, with Mantle Hood, LP record with 42-page booklet; UCLA: Institute of Ethnomusicology, 1967; Columbia Masterworks, 1973. (Reissued as CD with photocopy of booklet.)

“Musics of Southeast Asia”, in *Music Educators Journal: Music in World Cultures*, volume 59, number 2 (October 1972). (Republished for classroom use in 1972 by Music Educators National Conference, Washington D.C.)

Gamelan Music of Java, video with booklet; Honolulu: East-West Center, 1983.

“Harja Susilo: 26 Years of Flexibility & Tolerance”, interview by Geraldine Diamond, in *Balungan*, volume 1, number 1; Oakland, California: American *Gamelan* Institute, 1984. (available on line, gamelan.org/balungan click Back Issues, volume 1, number 1, Interview)

“Changing Strategies for the Cross-Cultural Karawitan Experience: A Quarter Century Perspective”, paper presented at The First International *Gamelan* Festival and Symposium, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, 1986.

“Improvisation in *Wayang Wong Panggung*: Creativity within Cultural Constraints”, in *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, volume 19, International Council for Traditional Music, 1987.

“Toward an Appreciation of Javanese *Gamelan*”, essay in the *AGI Library* (available on line, gamelan.org/library/writings/susiloessay.html), no date (after 1980).

“The Personification of Tradition: The Case of Sukasman’s *Wayang Ukur*’ in *Puppet Theatre in Contemporary Indonesia: New Approaches to Performance Events*, Jan Mrázek (editor), Ann Arbor: CSSEAS, University of Michigan Press, 2002.

“A Bridge to Java”: Four Decades Teaching *Gamelan* in America: Interview with Hardja Susilo by David Harnish, Ted Solis, and J. Lawrence Witzleben”, in *Performing Ethnomusicology: Teaching and Representation in World Music Ensembles*, Ted Solis (editor), Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

“Enculturation and Cross-Cultural Experiences in *Teaching Indonesian Gamelan*”, opening address for the BEAT! International *Gamelan* Festival, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, March 21–28, 1999; Asian Studies Institute Occasional Lecture 3, Asian Studies Institute: Wellington, 2005. Reprinted with permission in *Balungan*, volume 11, New Hampshire: American *Gamelan* Institute, 2010. (available on line, gamelan.org/balungan, click Current Issue, Memoire)

“Simultaneous Translation in Cross-Cultural *Wayang Kulit* Presentation: a personal account”, in *Between Tongues: Translation and/of/in Performance in Asia*, Jennifer Lindsay (editor), Singapore University Press, 2006.

“In Memoriam: Hardja Susilo”, by David Harnish. *SEM (The Society for Ethnomusicology) Newsletter*, Volume 49, Number 2, Spring 2015, pages 16-17.

In 1977 and 1979, Sus taught *gamelan* during the summer sessions at UCLA. In 1978, he taught the Northern Illinois University *gamelan* musicians to perform on the historical *gamelan* that was acquired by the Field Museum in Chicago after the 1893 Columbia Exposition. From 1989-1983, he taught during annual summer intensive *gamelan* program at the School for the Contemporary Arts, Simon Fraser University and the Western Front in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. He was also invited by them in 2005 to teach and perform in the *Gamelan Extravaganza Festival* there. After the Festival of Indonesia in America from 1990-1991, rather than returning the Balinese *gamelan Segara Madu* (Sea of Honey) to Bali, it was presented by the Balinese government to the University of Hawai’i at Manoa, which enabled Sus to begin a Balinese *gamelan* ensemble there.

Always searching for new ways to get others to appreciate Javanese culture, Sus provided live English translation during a full-length Javanese puppet performance of 8 hours by puppeteer Radyo Harsono and musicians from the Yogyakarta palace for the 1990 Festival of Indonesia in America at the Los Angeles Festival, a pioneering feat of endurance. He repeated this amazing task for master puppeteer Anom Soeroto at the Adelaide Festival in Australia in 1992. In 2001 Sus did simultaneous translations for 3-hour performances by Tristuti Rachmadi at the University of California at Santa Cruz and at Berkeley, directed by Benjamin Brinner and Santosa.

In 2002 with sponsorship from Roger Long of the UHM Drama and Theater Department along with the East-West Center Performing Arts Program, Sus directed the UHM Javanese *Gamelan* Ensemble in a unique performance by 3 master puppeteers from Central Java: Basiroen Hadisumarto, Subarno, and Sutarko. Each of them did one section of a single story with support by guest musicians and singers from Yogyakarta. In 2003 Sus did live translation for an abbreviated 3-hour puppet performance again by Anom Soeroto, sponsored by the Asian Research Institute, National University of Singapore, and TheatreWorks coordinated by Jennifer Lindsay.

In 1993, Sus received the *Hadiah Seni* (Arts Award) from Indonesia, the nation's highest art award in recognition of his efforts in promoting Javanese music and dance abroad. Even after retiring from the UHM Department of Music in 1999, he continued to teach *gamelan* and advise graduate students. In 2004 the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts presented Sus with a Folk Arts Apprenticeship Award that enabled him to give intensive training in Javanese drumming to the UHM Javanese *Gamelan* Ensemble co-director, Byron Moon, who was designated by Sus as its director.

For a memorable "final encore" in his most remarkable life, in November 2014 Sus assisted the UHM Javanese *Gamelan* Ensemble in the "Cup of Java" performance with 10 guest musicians and dancers from the Yogyakarta Indonesian Arts Institute (*Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta*), which was also presented in Los Angeles with musicians from the California Institute of the Arts through the Foundation for World Arts headed by Judy Mitoma.

In December 2015, the Society for Ethnomusicology will posthumously present Sus with a lifetime membership in recognition for his outstanding contributions to the field.

Sus was first married in 1966 to Judy Mitoma while at UCLA, and they had two children. Ken Susilo is a water resources engineer and performs Javanese and Balinese *gamelan*, and his transportation engineer wife June Truong Susilo as well as their two daughters also participate in Balinese music and dance. Emiko Susilo performs Balinese music and dance with the group Çudamani and is married to the group's founder Dewa Putu Berata, who is a Balinese musician-composer. She currently is artistic director of *Gamelan Sekar Jaya* (Glorious Flower), and their daughter and son are performers in this Balinese ensemble based in Berkeley, California. In 1984 Sus married ethnomusicologist JoLinda Feldman, and their daughter Chandra Susilo has also been involved with Balinese performing arts.

Hardja Susilo's legacy lives on in all of us who learned from him and continue to perform, teach, study, write about, and research Javanese music, dance and performing arts, and in our students, and their students.

Thanks to Ricardo Trimillos, Barbara Smith, David Harnish, Jody Diamond, Alan Feinstein, Philip Yampolsky, Rachel Cooper, Joan Suyenaga-Suhirdjan, Michiko Ueno-Herr, Ted Solis, Jennifer Lindsay, Valerie Mau-Vetter, Roger Vetter, Andy Sutton, Sumarsam, Judith Becker, Dane Harwood, Benjamin Brinner, Ken Susilo, and Graeme Vanderstoel for your information, suggestions, and corrections. This text, with some variation, appears electronically as an article by Garrett Kam on two websites: *Gamelan Listserv* (listserv.dartmouth.edu/Archives/gamelan) and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Hawaii (www.cseashawaii.org).

Garrett Kam
Bali, Indonesia
garrettkam@yahoo.com