

**IMPROVISED PAIRED DRUMMING: THE NGEMATIN/
NGEGONGIN RELATIONSHIP OF KENDANG ARJA**

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Abstract

This article examines how the drummers that accompany arja, a sung dance-drama of Bali, improvise, maintain the flow of interlocking, and avoid conflicting drum strokes. Improvised paired drumming is defined in this discussion as two drummers, each of which has a single drum, that have a relationship that allows them to interlock drum patterns while maintaining an improvised rhythmic relationship. Balinese music is notorious for its intricate melodic and rhythmic interlocking techniques. In general, two pre-composed parts combine to create a composite whole. The two Arja drummers occasionally employ this fixed relationship in the drama. However, the majority of their drumming is exceptional to this static fixed relationship. Each of the two drums has a basic vocabulary of drum patterns that are mixed and matched so long as the flow of interlocking is maintained. Previously unexplored in the literature, we will see how the terms ngematin and ngegongin, as well as interlocking principles divided among the wadon and lanang hierarchy constitute the 'building blocks' for improvised paired drumming.

Key Words: drummer, arja, improvised