

subjectivities described by Laksana, however, disputes the prevalence of this dynamic in Java. Instead, he describes religious pluralism as an intimate embrace that nevertheless preserves and edifies discreetly bounded, and in that sense, “authentic” religious identities. The outcome of religious pluralism in Java, then, is not syncretism or eclecticism, but a deepening spiritual formation that preserves religious distinctions and the theological boundaries that separate them.

While anthropologists like Joel Robbins (2006) had once described the “awkward” relationship between theology and ethnography, scholars from both sides have been increasingly open to dialogue and collaboration. Although Laksana places himself firmly within the former camp, his work resonates with that of anthropologists such as Philip Fountain and Sin Wen Lau (2013), who have more recently called for the pursuit of “anthropological theologies.” In this book, Laksana offers a substantive response to this call by adding rich, empirical depth to an ongoing transdisciplinary conversation, the development of which offers good prospects for a more comparative and more nuanced account of religious dynamism in Southeast Asia.

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## *Javaphilia: American Love Affairs with Javanese Music and Dance*

HENRY SPILLER

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In this monograph, Henry Spiller has critically examined the self-fashioning of four North American figures who positioned themselves as masters of Javanese dance and/or music to Western audiences throughout the twentieth century. In the process of this self-fashioning, these individuals appropriated specific facets of Javanese cultural production and then redeployed them in a new context, largely at home in the United States, to construct an unconventional or alternative identity and/or career for themselves, reifying problematic and essentializing tropes, and participating in

an Orientalist discourse along the way. However, I believe it is to the author's credit that he has described these individuals' personal and professional lives with kindness and humor, finding, and acknowledging, parallels with his own experience and involvement with the study and teaching of *gamelan*, as well as pointing out the cultural and academic contributions that these four figures have made to North American understandings of Javanese culture.

In his first chapter, Spiller lays out the thematic and theoretical structure of the book, providing brief overviews of the characters whose lives he will describe in what he calls "microhistories": Eva Gauthier (1885–1958), Hubert Stowitts (1892–1953), Mantle Hood (1918–2005), and Lou Harrison (1917–2003) (p. 24). He also spends some time situating his work within the context of recent research on Javanese culture and music (for example, that of Matthew Cohen) as well as tracing the lineage of orientalisms, American orientalisms in particular, in which these figures participate. In this, he is specifically working from Gina Marchetti's, L. S. Kim's, Erika Lee's, and Malini Johar Schueller's conceptualizations of orientalism within the United States. Taking North America's particular historical circumstances into account, including the United States' economic and military incursions and involvement in the Philippines, China, and Japan during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as a history of immigration by Asian communities to the West Coast, Schueller identifies two particular forms of American orientalism: first, the concept of Asia as a timeless, ancient place somehow simultaneously existing in contemporary world, and second, the concept of the "East" as a fundamentally spiritual Other. Furthermore, this history of immigration also created a space in which "American orientalisms reflected American approaches to situating one's self within larger communities and forging coherent self-understandings by articulating relationships to one's community and drawing boundaries with one's Others" (pp. 19–21). Therefore, Spiller argues that the four individuals he addresses in this volume were uniquely positioned, in terms of likelihood and methods, to appropriate Javanese cultural practices, as they understood them, to re-fashion their own identities (p. 22). Finally, the chapter itself, and indeed the book in its entirety, is framed by the juxtaposition of two expositions: the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893, and Expo '86, held in Vancouver in 1986. The comparison serves first to provide a historical context for American imaginings of Javanese culture during the twentieth century, and second, to highlight the proliferation of perspectives, both Indonesian and non-Indonesian, on Javanese *gamelan* performance that were evident 100 years later.

The second chapter focuses in more detail on the 1893 Columbian exposition and its effect on American conceptions of Java from the nineteenth century on. Here, Spiller addresses the physical layout of the exposition, and the history of world's fairs, specifically noting how they were designed to justify the supposed superiority of the host country or culture, and further to that, the processes of industrialization and empire. In the case of the 1893 exposition, the ideological message was clearly stated in the division between the White City, a model for an American city of the future, and the Midway Plaisance, the segregated area in which various cultural groups, including

a Bedouin community, groups from Turkey and Algeria, and of course, the Javanese community were situated, living in specially-constructed villages. Drawing upon newspaper articles, personal recollections, as well as recordings of Javanese music performed at the Exposition and descriptions of the music and experience of the Javanese village by visitors, Spiller demonstrates how the Javanese pavilion helped to shape North American perceptions of the “exotic” Javanese other as “gentle, childlike creatures who spent their time crafting objects of exquisite beauty” and staging performances of music and dance (p. 27). Ultimately, using these imperialist misconceptions, Javanese exoticism could be co-opted by later North American individuals eager to reconstruct their own identity for their own ends, or to use Javanese cultural idioms, as they understood them, to reconcile unconventional or socially unacceptable parts of their own persons.

The first of the four microhistories Spiller describes is that of Eva Gauthier, whose early life, travels to Java, and reinterpretation of Javanese music and dance to further her career in Europe and United States is the subject of the third chapter. From Spiller’s research, it appears that Gauthier’s engagement with Javanese music and dance was not originally a planned encounter, but rather the result of her pursuing a Dutch audience for her vocal performances in colonial Java. While there, she came into contact with Paul Seelig, who helped her by arranging music for performances that gradually began to include “Indies-inspired” compositions (p. 64). Further, in early 1914 Gauthier had the opportunity to hear *gamelan* music accompanying the annual eight-day Sekaten festival in honor of the prophet Muhammed while in Solo. Upon returning to North America in late 1914, Gauthier embarked on both research concerning Java as well as lectures and performances involving costumes and her repertoire of Java-inspired music and dance. Relying on “dicent authority,” or Thomas Turino’s concept of the authority of “having-been-there” (p. 6), Gauthier positioned herself as an authority on Javanese music, dance, and culture, simultaneously carving out a socially-acceptable and financially viable position for herself as an independent female performer during the early twentieth century, and equating her interpretation of Javanese music with North American and European avant-garde music.

The fourth chapter focuses on Hubert J. Stowitts, a dancer as well as set and costume designer professionally active from 1915 on. As a man who deeply valued the aesthetics of dance practice, and as a gay man, Stowitts found himself in search of a subjectivity, which he found in the appropriation of Javanese dance practice, and later as a lecturer and self-styled anthropologist, again based on his dicent authority. Specifically drawn to Java through his own orientalist understanding of Java’s exotic culture and its emphasis on dance, Stowitts spent the years 1927–31 studying performances in Yogyakarta and Solo and executing very detailed portraits of various dancers, accurately depicting details of their costuming and poses. Upon his return to the United States (and later travels to Europe), he began to give lectures and perform examples of Javanese dance, as well as arranging exhibitions of his paintings. Furthermore, Stowitts’s elevation of Javanese dance was rooted in his orientalist view of Javanese dance: as solely an engagement with the

spiritual, reflecting the “pure” aesthetic nature of the not-yet-modernized Java. As Spiller describes it, “[Stowitts’s] emphasis on a Javanese regard for dance as a normal activity for ordinary men . . . was part of an attempt to persuade Americans to change their mappings of masculinity, femininity, body worship, and sexuality and to redeem his own countercultural predilections” (p. 123).

The fifth chapter is devoted to investigating Mantle Hood’s career spent researching *gamelan*, and well as his interest in the occult and spiritualism, an interest that he kept private for much of his life. Here, Spiller points to Hood’s interest in Javanese music as not only stemming from an American Cold War pivot toward area studies research, particularly pertaining to those countries seen as key strategic allies for the United States, but also from Hood’s perception that the study of Javanese performing arts could provide a gateway for further understanding of the spiritual potential of music. Of foundational importance to North American teaching and performance of Javanese and Sundanese *gamelan* music, Hood’s “gamelan study group” (p. 132), founded at UCLA in the early 1950s, was not only the first such group in United States, and provided the model for future performance and study groups across the country, but also embodied Hood’s teaching ethos of “bimusicality,” in which students participated in musical performance as a research methodology for learning about foreign musical traditions. Hood’s reasoning for his appropriation and interpretation of Javanese culture in order to further his career was similar in some ways to that of Gauthier and Stowitts: in Javanese musical compositions he found what he saw as a potential spiritual corrective to the lack of understanding of the occult in West, and accordingly interpreted (and composed) *gamelan* music to suit his (sometimes inaccurate) view.

Finally, the last of the four individuals that Spiller addresses is Lou Harrison, whose career in composition, and specifically *gamelan*-inspired compositions, is the subject of the sixth chapter. Here, Spiller discusses Harrison’s appropriation of *gamelan* music as part of the composer’s attempts (similarly to the other individuals we have now met) to construct an alternative identity, in this case, a “maverick” identity. As the author carefully notes, while Harrison’s compositions evolved from “aural imitations of the generalized sounds of the *gamelan*” (p. 154) to a later, sustained engagement with not only the performance of, but also construction of *gamelan* instruments, several themes, somewhat antithetical to Javanese music and musical performance, remained enshrined within his work. For example, Harrison was deeply attached to the Western conception of the individual (genius) composer, in whom all authority rested, while *gamelan* ensembles generally rely on one or two members of the group to relay information about number of repetitions of section, or a change in style or tempo, to the rest of the group as the performance is in progress. This tendency (among other characteristics of *gamelan*) leads to a more communally-shared “ownership” and investment in the work (p. 179). Furthermore, in his fabrication of *gamelan* instruments, Harrison specifically altered their generally-accepted forms in order to grant himself greater flexibility in tuning and in the performance of multiple octaves, rather than confining their performance to the usual one octave (*ibid.*). Ultimately, Harrison’s self-fashioning as a composer

of Javanese-inspired *gamelan* music rested, as it did for the others, in the selective appropriation, re-interpretation, and deployment of facets of Javanese culture and practice that conformed to either his conception of himself, or as a corrective for the mid-twentieth century North American society in which he found himself.

Rather than choosing to recount the lives of those individuals who identified with “affinity groups” as part of their study and absorption of Javanese culture, Spiller has instead chosen Gauthier, Stowitts, Hood, and Harrison as “solitary figures,” whose interest in and devotion to the study of Javanese music and performance resulted in personal appropriations in order to construct an identity that, in some cases, had ultimately very little to do with Javanese or Sundanese culture itself. In the last and seventh chapter, returning again to the 1986 Expo '86 held in Vancouver, the author describes the rich outpouring of creative collaboration and interpretation of *gamelan* music, on the part of both Western and Javanese and Sundanese researchers and performers. At the same time, however, he productively maps Timothy Taylor’s three “clusters” of Western domination of foreign or “exotic” cultures (colonialism, imperialism, and globalization) on top of the interests and activities of the four individuals whose lives he has explored in the previous chapters, clearly noting the deeply orientalist and culturally imperialist elements of their work. With *Javaphilia*, I believe Spiller has carefully walked the line of critical evaluation of these performers’ and composers’ contributions to North American understanding and practice of *gamelan* music and Javanese performance, while simultaneously acknowledging the unequal power structures at play in each individuals’ appropriations and redeployments of Javanese performance traditions within their own lives. Certainly in terms of the history of cultural reception of Javanese influence within North America, as well as the context for the historiography of Javanese *gamelan* music in both academic and popular contexts, this book is not only accessibly-written, but also a solid contribution to a growing body of work devoted to critical assessments of the power structures at play in the inter-cultural exchanges of musical and performance traditions.

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