



## FEATURE

### THE GAMELAN WAY

Meets National Core Arts Standards 1, 2, 6, 7, and 11

#### OBJECTIVES

- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work (Cr1)
- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work (Cr2)
- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work (Pr6)
- Perceive and analyze artistic work (Re7)
- Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding (Cn11)

#### MATERIALS

- *Music Alive!* magazines (March 2017)
- Computer or mobile device with Internet access
- Globe or map of the world

#### START

1. **Invite students to read** “The Gamelan Way” on pages 10-13 either silently, in pairs, or as a class. Find Java and Bali on the map. Then review the words below. [This reinforces comprehension and vocabulary.]

**ARCHIPELAGO**—a large body of water containing many islands, typically in a distinct group

**PROLIFERATE**—to spread or multiply, usually rapidly

**EVOCATION**—the act of calling up or suggesting the sound, look, or feeling of something else

**FLEET**—quick, nimble, swift, rapid

**RIVETING**—captivating, hard to ignore or turn attention away from

2. **Look at Indonesia on the map.** Note its proliferation of islands. Now trace the spread of Islam beginning in the 7th century, from Saudi Arabia, through India, down through Southeast Asia and into Indonesia by the 15th century. Now locate Java and Bali. Think about how remarkable it is that this powerful cultural/religious movement came all this way and completely dominated Java, only to stop before overtaking Bali. Bali remained and remains within the sphere of an earlier religious movement from India, namely Hinduism.

#### ASK

- **What English language word comes from the Indonesian language, and from gamelan tradition?** (Gong.)
- **Why do you think Balinese gamelans would use a smaller number of instruments than Javanese ones?** (The island itself is much smaller; the original gamelans were transported from Java at a time when ensembles were smaller; the music is much faster and busier, a sound that works better on a smaller number of instruments.)
- **What were the circumstances that led to the creation of jaipong music in West Java in the 1960s?** (Western music was having an increasing influence, to the

point that the government sought to ban it. People, particularly young people, felt a need to create a music that felt modern, but avoided Western influence.)

#### DEVELOP

- ▶ **1. Play** “Gendhing Prabu Mataram” from *Java Court Gamelan, Vol. III* (Hear the Music playlist **track 5** on [musicalive.com](http://musicalive.com)). Identify the components of the gamelan as they are heard. First, we hear the bronze instrument ensemble. Each of these instruments is using a damping technique to prevent a chaos of ringing overtones and to allow melodies to be heard. After one minute, the one-string violin (*rebab*), flute (*suling*), and solo singer (*pasindhèn*) enter, accompanied soon by the male chorus. Note the calm, stately character of this music.
- ▶ **2. Play** “Tabuh Gari” from *BALI Gamelan Semar Pegulingan* (Hear the Music playlist **track 6** on [musicalive.com](http://musicalive.com)). What is different about this music compared with the Javanese piece? There are less instruments, no vocals, exclusive use of bronze metallophones, and much faster tempos. Listen for dramatic speed variations throughout.
- ▶ **3. Play** “Ketjak Dance (excerpt)” from *BALI Music from the Morning of the World* (Hear the Music playlist **track 7** on [musicalive.com](http://musicalive.com)). Ketjak is an alternate spelling of kecak; in Indonesian, “c” in the middle of a word is pronounced “ch.” The full-on chanting begins at 1:07. Listen to the textures created by different sections of the ensembles chanting the word “chak” in different rhythmic locations. Arrange the students in a circle, divide them into groups, and attempt to recreate this sound!

#### CLOSE

Gamelan is a fascinating example of an ancient music that has changed continually over time, right up to the present. And yet, for all those changes and influences, it retains a very distinct local character.

#### ASSESS

- **Did the students read the article?**
- **Did the students understand the path of the Islamic movement from the 7th century to the 15th century?**
- **Did the students answer the questions?**
- **Did the students listen to the songs and understand the meaning behind them?**
- **Did the class recreate the rhythmic chanting of the kecak dance?**