

Building a Comprehensive Repository for Montreal Gamelan Archives

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Abstract : After the showcase of traditional Indonesian performing arts at the Vancouver Expo 1986, Canadian universities inherited sets of Indonesian gamelan orchestras and soon began offering courses for music students interested in learning these diverse traditions. Among them, Université de Montréal was offered two sets of Balinese orchestras, a novelty that allowed a community of Montreal gamelan enthusiasts to form and engage with this music. A few generations later, a large body of archives have amassed, framing the history of this niche community's achievements. This data, scattered in public and private archive collections, comes in various formats: Digital Audio Tape, audio cassettes, Video Home System videotape, digital files, photos, reel-to-reel audiotape, posters, concert programs, letters, TV shows, reports and more. Attempting to study these documents in order to unearth a chronology of gamelan in Montreal has proven to be challenging since no suitable platform for preservation, storage, and research currently exists. These files are, therefore, hard to find due to their decentralized locations. Additionally, most of the documents in older formats have yet to be digitized. In the case of recent digital files, such as pictures or rehearsal recordings, their locations can be even messier and their quantity overwhelming. Aside from the basic issue of choosing a suitable repository platform, questions of legal rights and methodology arise. For posterity, these documents should nonetheless be digitized, organized, and stored in an easily accessible online repository. This paper aims to underline the various challenges encountered in the early stages of such a project as well as to suggest ways of overcoming the obstacles to a thorough archival investigation.

Keywords : archival work, archives, Balinese gamelan, Canada, Gamelan, Indonesia, Javanese gamelan, Montreal

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