

## Handout 2: Educator's Notes

### Optional Activities

These are suggested activities that educators may want to carry out in class to further explore *gamelan* music with students as a follow up.

#### Activity 1: What's in a Gamelan scale?

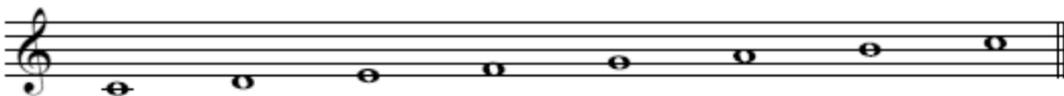
Introduce that through interaction with other cultures such as Indian, Arabic, Chinese and European. A wide range of musical styles have been developed in Indonesia with influences from many diverse cultures.

Scales are the very first thing a composer thinks about when writing a new piece of music as scales provide the:

- 1) Key Signature
- 2) Colour (Bright or Dark)
- 3) Mood (Happy or Sad)

The most common scales in Western Music are the Major and Natural Minor scales. Play the Major scales and Natural Minor scales and ask the students to compare the patterns they hear, and the colour/mood of each scale.

The major scale has a bright sound:



The A minor (natural) scale:



Draw out the notes on the board for the students. Get the students to notice that the C Major scale and A Minor (natural) scale share the same key signature and notes. The only difference is that the Minor scale begins on the 6th scale step of C Major.

There are many kinds of scales in music:  
Whole Tone, Blues, Chromatic, Octatonic, Egyptian etc.

## Pentatonic Scale

Introduce students to the **Pentatonic** scale.



The pentatonic scale has the fewest notes among the various types of scales. Play the pentatonic scale and ask the students to compare it to the Major scale. What is different?

**Answer:** It does not include the 4th and 7th notes of the C Major scale.

## Slendro Scale

The **Slendro** scale in *Gamelan* music is a type of Pentatonic scale:

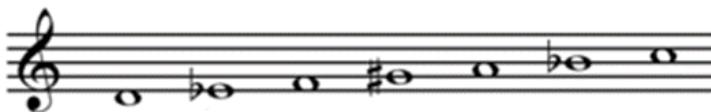


In Bahasa Indonesia, the term *Slendro* is derived from either 'Sailendra', the name of the ruling family in the 8th and 9th centuries when Borobudur was built, or from its earlier being given by the god Sang Hyang Hendra.

The Slendro scale is typically used for Javanese *gamelan* music.

## Pelog Scale

The **Pelog** scale, however, has 7 pitches. In Bahasa Indonesia, the term 'Pelag' means 'fine' or 'beautiful'.



The Pelog scale is typically used in loud, flamboyant *gamelan* pieces. The main difference between the two scales lies in the interval between the tones, rather than the number of tones. The Slendro scale has equal intervals between the notes, whereas the Pelog scale has unequal intervals between the tones.

## Activity 2: The Essentials of Gamelan Music – Texture

Introduce students to the **texture of gamelan music**. Explain that it is built up in layers. Introduce key terms to students:

- Heterophony: where a single melodic line is varied simultaneously and a variation of the melody is played over the original melody.
- Interlocking rhythmic patterns: *Gamelan* music is well-known for interlocking rhythmic patterns which are characterised by many short melodies coming together to form a whole.
- Colotomic structure: referring to instruments playing patterns of notes marking certain periods of time. In the case of a *gamelan* ensemble, the gong marks the start of each cycle.

Note: The patterns are cyclic and each piece is made up of many cycles. Each cycle may endure short or long durations. All the structures in *gamelan* music are directed towards the last note of a structure, which is the most important note. Teachers can demonstrate the patterns with students using the phrase 'I like iced tea'.

### Instructions:

Get students to perform this. You will need to find one student to keep time, and another four students to recite the following.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
			I				like				iced				tea
	I		like		iced		tea		I		like		iced		tea
			I		real-	ly	like		drink-	ing	iced		le-	mon	tea
I	I	I	I	like	like	like	like	iced	iced	iced	iced	tea	tea	tea	tea

Adapted from *Gamelan Social (2017)* resource guides, written by Dr Ruth Rodrigues