

Gamelan-bound / beFORe JOHN²
- for six percussion players –
(2008)

My personal relation to gamelan music is relatively new. Our percussion group Amadinda first played traditional Javanese, Sundanese and Balinese music with guest musician friends at the Budapest Spring Festival in 2008. Although I had heard authentic Indonesian groups before, listening to this music from the player's perspective was a very different experience. As gamelan exposed me to a number of new experiences and findings as an instrumentalist, over time it also began to inspire me as a composer. What excited me the most was the extremely fast, interlocking rhythm patterns of *gamelan gong kebyar*, a primarily Balinese style: I wanted to combine this playing method (which requires virtuoso hand technique and extreme focus) with my own sounds. When composing this piece, I used additional elements of gamelan music, even authentic themes, thus the composition became "gamelan dependent". More specifically, until taking its final form,

1. it moved closer and closer to gamelan, and
2. it became increasingly tied to this musical style

hence the title, *gamelan-bound*, which refers to both of these aspects.

Although I frequently recalled the sounds and sights of this distant culture that I only know from photos, films and travel books, I strove for a sound that *builds on* gamelan instead of merely *resembling* it. At the same time, besides traditional and unique percussion items, I also used authentic instruments, e.g. Balinese ceng-ceng and many differently sized and differently played gongs.

The line-up of players resembles that of Balinese orchestras somewhat: musicians who play the fast, interlocking patterns make up two pairs. Thematic, slower musical motives are played on bass pipes and a dedicated player is in charge with keeping time and holding the orchestra together.

Gamelan-bound, the second piece of the beFORe JOHN series, was commissioned by the Ju Percussion Group Foundation in 2008.

Aurél Holló

(English text by Zoltán Farkas)