

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE
Department of Music presents

Javanese Gamelan Ensemble:
Kecak Workshop
Joko Sutrisno, director

Florence Bayz Music Series
Dr. Amy Skjerseth, *coordinator*

Wednesday, January 14, 2026
12:00 – 12:50 P.M.
Music Rehearsal Hall, ARTS 157

Javanese Gamelan Ensemble: Kecak Workshop

Kecak (pronounced: "KEH-chak"), a form of Balinese music drama, originated in the 1930s. Also known as the *Ramayana* Monkey Chant, the piece is performed by a large group of people who percussively chant "chak" while throwing up their arms. It depicts a battle from the *Ramayana* in which monkeys help Prince Rama fight the evil King Ravana. Kecak is high-energy; its interlocking vocal patterns, ranging from primordial animal gutturals to ethereal melodies of exquisite beauty and sophistication, have inspired some of Bali's most innovative contemporary choreography.

Javanese Gamelan Music

The word *gamelan* refers to a set of musical instruments from the islands of Java and Bali in Indonesia, made of tuned gongs, gong chimes (racks of small gongs), and metal-keyed instruments of various sizes. A gamelan ensemble may also include drums, xylophones, fiddles, flutes, and zithers, as well as singing (both solo and chorus). Similar ensembles exist throughout Southeast Asia, such as *piphat* in Thailand or *kulintang* in the Philippines, but none are as large as the gamelan ensembles of Java and Bali. Gamelan has been one of the main and most important expressions of Javanese society since 404 AD.

Gamelan instruments serve one of three musical functions: those that provide the time structure, those that state the melody, and those that elaborate upon the melody. A gamelan varies from eight to over twenty-five instruments and players, depending on the occasion and setting. The chiming, bell-like sound texture is like no other and is notably identifiable with Indonesia. Some repertoire played by today's groups is traditional, but gamelan is not a museum tradition; contemporary composers continually supply new repertoire, integrating influences from sources worldwide.

A complete gamelan is made up of instruments of two distinct tuning systems, *laras pélog* and *laras sléndro*, with at least one common tone. The UCR set, named Kyai Telaga Semu (Venerable Lake of Illusions), is a large set with both tuning systems. It was purchased with the assistance of master musician Rasito Purwopangrawit, who also named it.

About the Ensemble

By maintaining, preserving, developing, and studying gamelan music, our purpose is to make it a means of connecting individuals within our larger community. Our goal is for students and members to discover and strengthen their own identity, and that we all can play a role in creating *hamemayu hayuning bawono* – peace and harmony in this world. The UCR Javanese Gamelan Ensemble (MUS 168) is offered during the Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters as a course in the Department of Music, meeting on Wednesday evenings from 6–9 p.m. The course is open to all students, faculty, staff, and community members, and no prior experience is required. All questions and inquiries should be directed to Joko Sutrisno (jokos@ucr.edu).

About the Director

Joko Sutrisno, an accomplished Javanese gamelan performer, composer, and educator, graduated from the Indonesian Institute of Arts, Surakarta-Java, in 1987. Prior to moving to the U.S. in 1995, he directed the gamelan ensemble at Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand, for 8 years. He was the artistic director of Sumunar Gamelan and Dance Ensemble of Minnesota, with whom he has conducted a wide variety of gamelan classes, workshops, and residencies for both youth and adult students from 2000 to 2024. He is also consulting director for gamelan ensembles at Saint Thomas University, the University of South Dakota, Concordia College (Moorhead), and Hamilton College (New York). He was recently appointed as the gamelan instructor at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music as well as at UC Riverside.

Joko has received numerous local and national awards, most recently: Creative Individuals from Minnesota State Arts Board 2022 and 2024; Creative Individuals from Minnesota State Arts Board 2022 and 2023; Arts Impact for Individuals from Metropolitan Regional Arts Center, St. Paul 2022 and 2023; Arts Initiative from Minnesota State Arts Boards (2018); the 2018 Outstanding Alumni Award from his alma mater, the Indonesian Institute of Arts in Surakarta; a 2016 McKnight Composer Fellowship; and a Twin Cities Ivey Award for musical design and direction for a 2014 Green T theatre production.

SPECIAL THANKS

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