

EVAN ZIPORYN
Amok!

New World Records 80565

Fascination with Balinese music has already become something of a tradition among North American composers. Colin McPhee (1900–1964) fell in love with the enchanting sonic texture of the gamelan orchestra seven decades ago; Steve Reich studied its structural principles in the 1970s. Evan Ziporyn represents a new development in this tradition: Along with his colleagues Wayne Vitale and Michael Tenzer, he spent decades learning, performing, and teaching Balinese music, both in Bali and the United States. With them, he was a member of Sekar Jaya, the extraordinarily successful community-based gamelan ensemble of Northern California. Upon leaving Sekar Jaya, he founded the Galak Tika ensemble, whose performers are heard on this recording of his recent compositions.

Ziporyn's story began in the late 1970s at Yale University, where he studied Western composition. He had already heard one recording of Balinese music but it made little impression on him. One day, however, hanging out at a local pizza parlor, he overheard his composition teacher Martin Bresnick announce that recent Yale graduate Michael Tenzer had returned from Bali with a gamelan. Ziporyn asked Bresnick for Tenzer's address—it was in northern California—and discovered that Tenzer was involved in Sekar Jaya, a gamelan ensemble taught by the great Balinese musician I Wayan Suweca. Ziporyn went to Berkeley for the summer to play in Sekar Jaya, and was so impressed that he eventually enrolled in the Ph.D. program at the University of California at Berkeley, where he could pursue Western composition while learning Balinese music in Sekar Jaya, thereby partaking of a double musical apprenticeship.

Although it was situated in America and its membership was American, Sekar Jaya at first dedicated itself exclusively to traditional Balinese music. Ziporyn felt that playing this repertory might hold great personal value for the ensemble's members, but it could not be a contribution to American music. He also wondered how Sekar Jaya's enthusiastic and loyal audiences were hearing the group's traditional Balinese pieces—were they listening to them as *music*, or as brilliant but alien sounds, distant, separated from them by an invisible wall? He felt that the ensemble could become a living part of American music only by devoting itself to new compositions.

The first products of Ziporyn's struggle with his dual musical allegiances were *Kekembangan* (in collaboration with the great Balinese composer I Nyoman Windha), and *Aneh Tapi Nyata* (both available on New World Records 80430-2). It was in writing the latter piece that Ziporyn began to understand, and surmount, his musical identity crisis. As he put it, "I had the sense that I was finally making *my* music."

What makes a music "*my* music"? Is it preference, knowledge, passion, creativity, heritage, politics? Whatever the answer may be, the search for "one's own" music, and the avoidance of music that is not "one's own," are powerful motives in the lives of many American composers. Worries about musical identity were nothing new to Ziporyn; as a performer, he had agonized over his involvement with jazz, a music he had long cultivated: "One reason I stopped playing jazz clarinet is because I realized it would never be my music. I could play halfway decent bebop and knew I could devote myself to it, but I felt it wasn't really my music. It'd be like becoming fluent in a second language. So

I stopped and didn't go back to it for fifteen years.”

It wasn't until he discovered the unclassifiable musical language of *Aneh Tapi Nyata* that he reopened the question of his musical identity: “I now think I was wrong to assume that I had a *first* language; even as a kid I'd float between classical music and garage bands. I had no rooted tradition.” Ziporyn's subsequent pieces seem to float similarly between musical languages and between musical worlds, turning the problems of musical identity into a source of creative energy.

For example, Ziporyn's compositions for Western instruments often incorporate non-Western materials. Some of them follow non-Western models very closely, but apply them to radically different media (a Balinese gamelan composition arranged for solo cello, a Georgian choral song played by solo bass clarinet). Ziporyn is aware that his Western-trained sensibilities shape his perceptions of these models, but he cherishes the “found” meanings and partial coherences that result: “It's a way of getting to a compositional place I wouldn't otherwise get to,” as he puts it.

Ziporyn's compositions for Balinese gamelan, by contrast, often seem to portray the problems of musical and cultural coexistence. The singer in *Aneh Tapi Nyata* laments the rootlessness of the modern West, and asks the Balinese for their leftover sacred offerings. In *Tire Fire* and *Amok!* the relations of Bali and the West are dramatized without words, but no less strikingly.

Both *Aneh Tapi Nyata* and *Tire Fire* were written for Sekar Jaya, but after Ziporyn had already left the group to teach composition at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Soon after arriving there he realized that he needed to have Balinese music in his life. MIT funded the purchase of a set of gamelan instruments; a pair of brilliant performers, I Nyoman Catra and Desak Madé Suarti Laksmi, taught the group, and in 1993 the mischievously named Galak Tika was born. (“Galak” means wild, fierce, or passionate, but has no clear Balinese sense when used with “tika.” The punning reference to the American science-fiction television series seems appropriate for an MIT gamelan ensemble, however.)

Tire Fire's very instrumentation (Balinese gamelan with electric guitars) hints at Ziporyn's intentions for this piece. Over the years he had witnessed many well-meaning but ill-informed and hastily mounted intercultural experiments. Often these amounted to little more than the juxtaposition of gestures from different traditions held together by earnest pleas for tolerance and global unity. Although *Tire Fire* ends with its own ecstatic affirmation, much of it represents a savage critique of the unreflective and simplistic cultural vision implicit in some intercultural performance. Bringing together a gamelan—a unique, handcrafted product, tuned to a non-standardized scale—with factory-made guitars, tuned to a standard tempered scale, dependent on the centralized electric generators of an industrialized society—*Tire Fire* reminds us of the depth of cultural differences. Its dissonant clashes invite us to take the reality of cross-cultural conflict as seriously as we take the hope of cross-cultural understanding.

The piece begins with the gamelan, but soon the dissonant guitars intrude “like the arrival of the conquistadors,” as Ziporyn puts it. The “native” music disturbed by these invaders is not paradisaical, however. Though the gamelan plays interlocking patterns (*kotekan*) in Balinese fashion, the beat keeps shifting in a most un-Balinese way. At this point, both sets of instruments are off balance. As the piece progresses, the guitars and gamelan try out various ways to use cycles and *kotekan*, viewing

the same basic melodic materials from different angles. Only at the end do both groups find idioms appropriate to their respective instruments, as a repeating bass line unites the kotekan of the gamelan and the rock stylings of the guitars. The interlocking figuration here is unusual but not unheard-of in the Balinese context; it vaguely suggests the peculiar kotekan of *gandrung*, a now-rare bamboo ensemble. American listeners are more likely to be reminded of the Grateful Dead. But *Tire Fire* is meant to permit this kind of perspectival listening: what you hear will depend on where you are sitting in cultural space.

Amok!, too, is a portrait of cultural possibilities. The provocative title seems to suggest linguistically the sort of serendipitous cross-cultural epiphanies Ziporyn strives for in his music: the word *amuk* entered English from Southeast Asia. But in this piece the Western technology of the digital sampler allows Ziporyn to explore the interpenetration and blurring of boundaries on levels impossible in his previous work.

The sampler “eats up the whole gamelan and spits it out again.” Listen, for example, to the start of part 2, where the sampler transposes the gamelan’s gong to different pitches. As the beats expand and contract, this single-note time-keeping instrument becomes a melody instrument, a virtual forest of gongs. It is as if a single gong were hung in a hall of digital mirrors. Soon afterward the sampler introduces nine-note chord clusters, as though all of the keys of a Balinese metallophone were played at once. In these and many other ways the sampler lets Ziporyn construct “an impossible musical landscape.”

Ziporyn sees this integration, too, as a social metaphor. In *Amok!* “the alien elements could be folded into the ensemble the way foreign elements are incorporated into Balinese culture. You don’t ignore the fact that there’s a motorcycle there but you give offerings to it.”

This may seem an odd description of *Amok!* Is the sampler really “folded into” the ensemble at the same time as it “eats it up”? This is perhaps not a question we need to take too seriously; as Ziporyn says, in the final analysis, *Amok!* is “just music.” But regardless of how it sounds, as a *social* experience *Amok!* remains somehow Balinese. Although Ziporyn produced a written score for both *Amok!* and *Tire Fire*, he taught both pieces to Galak Tika by rote; the musicians neither learned nor performed these pieces from notation. Furthermore, with the exception of the contrabass part, all of the sounds on this recording, Western and non-Western, are produced by Galak Tika’s own members. Even in compositions incorporating so many Western musical and technological elements, Ziporyn wanted to preserve one aspect he found so compelling about Balinese music: the ensemble experience.

—Marc Perlman

Marc Perlman, *an ethnomusicologist specializing in the musics of Indonesia, teaches at Brown University.*

From Lincoln Center to Balinese temples, from loft spaces to international festivals, **Evan Ziporyn** (composer, artistic director) has traveled the globe in search of new musical possibilities. His work is influenced by his twenty-year involvement with Balinese gamelan, which has ranged from intensive study of traditional music to the creation of a series of groundbreaking works for gamelan and Western instruments. His compositions for conventional forces have been performed by the Kronos Quartet, Bang on a Can, Nederlands Blazer Ensemble, master p’ipaist Wu Man, Maya Beiser and Steven Schick, California EAR Unit, and Orkest de Volharding. As a bass clarinetist, he has

developed a distinctive set of extended techniques which he has used in his own solo works, as well as in new works by Martin Bresnick, Michael Tenzer, and David Lang. He has been associated with the Bang on a Can Festival since its founding in 1987, appearing as composer, soloist, and ensemble leader. As a member of the Bang on a Can All-Stars, he has toured over a dozen countries and worked with composers such as Louis Andriessen, Glenn Branca, Nick Didkovsky, Arnold Dreyblatt, Brian Eno, Hermeto Pascoal, Ralph Shapey, and Henry Threadgill. He also regularly performs and records as a featured soloist with Steve Reich and Musicians. As a conductor, he has toured Europe with Germany's acclaimed Ensemble Modern and has recorded Michael Gordon's *Weather* with Ensemble Resonanz.

Born in Chicago in 1959, Ziporyn received degrees from Yale University and the University of California, Berkeley, where his primary teachers were Martin Bresnick and John Blacking. Upon completing a Fulbright Fellowship in Indonesia, he became Musical Coordinator of San Francisco's Gamelan Sekar Jaya in 1988. He collaborated with Balinese composer I Nyoman Windha on *Kekembangan*, a border-crossing work for full gamelan and saxophone quartet. This and Ziporyn's follow-up work for a similarly eclectic ensemble were released as *American Music for Balinese Gamelan Orchestra* (New World). Moving to Boston in 1990 to take a teaching position at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he founded Gamelan Galak Tika in 1993.

As a performer and recording artist, Ziporyn has worked with a range of master musicians from numerous musical cultures, including Paul Simon, Tan Dun, Maya Beiser and Steven Schick, Darius Brubeck, Sandhile Shange and Allen Kwela, Bob Moses, and Tony Scott. Venues have included New York's Lincoln Center, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, London's Southbank Centre, and the Bali Arts Festival. A CD of his own works, "Animal Act," is available on CRI; he has also recorded for Gramavision, Nonesuch, New Albion, New Tone, Point Music, and Sony Classical. He has received grants from the Rockefeller Multi-Arts Program, Meet the Composer, the New England Foundation for the Arts, NEA/Arts International, ASCAP, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. He is currently a professor of music at MIT.

Gamelan Galak Tika was founded in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in September 1993 by artistic director Evan Ziporyn, along with Balinese artists Nyoman Catra and Desak Made Suarti Laksmi. A part of the MIT Music and Theater Arts program, its membership is comprised of both students and members of the community: alumni, staff, students from other universities, and people who happened to have walked by during an outdoor rehearsal. The group learns aurally, without the aid of notation, and functions in the tradition of a Balinese village *sekeha*, with decisions made communally and responsibilities shared among the members of the ensemble.

Since its inception, the group has devoted itself both to studying traditional Balinese music and dance and to developing new works by Balinese and American composers. It has given dozens of performances around the East Coast and New England, at venues ranging from the Bang on a Can Marathon at Lincoln Center to Boston's First Night to an appearance at the Kripalu Yoga Institute. Its programs have included presentations of traditional Balinese repertoire, new works by twentieth-century Balinese composers, collaborations with the MIT Shakespeare Ensemble, and work with tai chi master Bow Sim Mark. It has given school workshops, offered dance classes, and devised the first-ever "*kecak*-a-long," a participatory performance in which 1,000 people were taught to shout the interlocking rhythms of the famous Balinese monkey chant. The name *Galak Tika* is

Old Javanese for *Intense Togetherness*. This is its first commercial recording.

Robert Black (double bass), one of the music world's leading double bassists, is equally at home in the classical and contemporary repertoire. He has commissioned more than 50 of today's most interesting composers, including John Cage, Christian Wolff, Michael Gordon, and James Sellars. He is also known for his innovative inclusion of current music technology in recitals and chamber music performances, including MIDI, computers, and video. He regularly presents recitals throughout North and South America, Japan, and Europe as a featured soloist and with the Bang on a Can All-Stars; Basso Bongo, an interactive computer and electronic duo with percussionist Amy Knoles; with the performance art/dance ensemble The School of Hard Knocks; and in duo improvisations with composer-electronicist Richard Zvonar. He has collaborated with theater companies such as the Perseverance Theater in Alaska; he has made music for films by Rudy Burckhardt; and he is known worldwide for his educational presentations to schoolchildren. Black teaches at the Hartt School in Hartford, Connecticut, and the FUNDEC Eleazar de Carvalho in Brazil. Robert Black has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts Solo Recitalist Program, the Canada Council, the New England Foundation for the Arts, the Aaron Copland Foundation, and the Fund for U.S. Artists at International Festivals and Exhibitions. He has recorded for Sony Classical, O.O., Koch International, CRI, Neuma, Gasparo, Opus One, Artifact, Point, and Folkways.

Amok!

Robert Black, double bass

Dan Schmidt, sampler

Erin McCoy, ugal (lead metallophone)

Eran Egozy, suling (bamboo flutes)

Eran Egozy, Miranda Fan, Bettina Kimpton, Yukiko Ueno, reong (tuned rack gongs)

Barry Davis, Curtis Hughes, Corinne Ilvedson, Chris Kline, Sharon

Schoffmann, Aaron Woolsey, gangsa (interlocking metallophones)

Paul Chang, Mark Stewart, jublag (tenor metallophones)

Chris Kline, Leon Rothenberg, jegogan (bass metallophones)

Ed Whalen, ceng-ceng (turtle cymbals)

Joe Davis, gongs

Andrew McGraw, kempli (time-keeper)

Evan Ziporyn, kendang (barrel drum), sampler, kempli

Gamelan samples recorded by Alex Rigopulos

Sample programming by Evan Ziporyn, with assistance from Leon Rothenberg and Dan Schmidt

Tire Fire

I Nyoman Catra, kendang (drum)

Jean Moncrieff and Desak Made Suarti Laksmi, gender rambat and ugal (lead metallophones)

Eric Byers, lead electric guitar

Mark Stewart, electric guitar

Yukiko Ueno, keyboard

Blake Newman, electric bass

Erin McCoy, Alex Rigopulos, Sarah Wheeler, Aaron Woolsey, reong (tuned rack gongs)

Scott Davis, Eran Egozy, Miranda Fan, John Keith, Arley Kim, Mark Messier,

Andy Rasmussen, Ben Steinberg, gangsa (interlocking metallophones)
Juliana Atmadja, Sharon Schoffmann, jublag (tenor metallophones)
Eric Boehlke, Amy Ly, jegogan (bass metallophones)
Kalafya Brown, ceng-ceng (turtle cymbals)
Jane Hammer, gongs
Evan Ziporyn, kempli (time-keeper)

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

American Works for Balinese Gamelan Orchestra. Gamelan Sekar Jaya, New World 80430-2.
Animal Act. Evan Ziporyn. CRI 645.
Bali: Gamelan and Kecak. A sampler; recorded by David Lewison. Nonesuch 79204-2.
Cheating, Lying, Stealing. Bang on a Can. Sony Classical 62255.
Kinship. Maya Beiser. Koch International 7464.
Music for Airports. Brian Eno, arr. Bang on a Can. Point Music 314536847-2.
Music of Bali: Gamelan Semar Pegulingan. Performed by the five-tone Semar Pegulingan ensemble of the village of Ketewel; recorded by Wayne Vitale. Lyricord Lyr 7408.
Music of the Gamelan Gong Kebyar, Vol. 2: Works of I Nyoman Windha. Vital Records 402.
Music of Indonesia 3-Music from the Outskirts of Jakarta. Smithsonian Folkways.
Music of Indonesia 20-Guitars. Smithsonian Folkways.
New York Counterpoint; Eight Line; Four Organs. Steve Reich. Nonesuch 79481-2.
The Roots of Gamelan-Bali 1928-New York 1941. World Arbiter 2001.
State of the Bass. Robert Black O.O. Discs 14.
The Bali Sessions. Rykodisc 10449.
Tabu-Tabuhan. McPhee, Colin. American Composers Orchestra, Dennis Russell Davies, conducting. Argo 444560-2.
Weather. Michael Gordon. Ensemble Resonanz, Evan Ziporyn, conducting. Nonesuch 79553.

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Produced by Evan Ziporyn

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Edited and mixed by Joel Gordon and Evan Ziporyn

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**EVAN ZIPORYN (b. 1959) 80565-2
GAMELAN GALAK TIKA**

Amok! (publ. Airplane Ears Music, ASCAP)

- 1 6:24
- 2 5:20
- 3 3:30
- 4 5:17
- 5 4:15
- 6 7:02

Robert Black, double bass; Gamelan Galak Tika

Tire Fire (publ. Airplane Ears Music, ASCAP)

- 7 4:16
- 8 5:01
- 9 2:59
- 10 3:39
- 11 4:21

Eric Byers, Mark Stewart, electric guitars; Yukiko Ueno, keyboard; Blake Newman, electric bass;
Gamelan Galak Tika

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