



## Eberhard Schoener „Bali-Agúng“



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The island Bali in the Indian Ocean became perhaps the most important chapter in the musical life of Eberhard Schoener. There he found something he had not seen before, - at least not in the Western civilized world he lived in - and he felt a strong desire for empirical music. Feeling is the credo in Eberhard's music. He is a musician who concluded that things can arise out of the feeling of the moment and that he must have the courage to go for it. "In modern music", he says "feelings were immediately dismissed as kitsch".

Eberhard owes the discovery of Bali to Johannes Schaaf, who first brought him to this island but he really got to know Bali through the Swiss artist Theo Meier who introduced Eberhard to his longtime friend, the Prince Agung Raka in Saba.



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Eberhard extended all his antennae and drank in the Balinese life. Agung Raka introduced him to the gamelan music. Gamelan is not only referring to a style of music but also to the instruments used to create it.

Most gamelan instruments are beaten with a hammer made of wood or horn. Mainly, they consist of metallophones with bars made of bronze, gongs and drums. Depending on the style, flutes and xylophone might also be added. In the old days, every village and every aristocrat has had its / his own gamelan.

Eberhard observing how Agung Raka treated his musicians, with precision and patience, Eberhard learned not to make decisions for the musicians, but simply to accompany them instead.

By watching and listening, Eberhard learned to understand the musical approach of the gamelan musicians. This was something completely new to him: "They just let this very difficult music flow into their souls, which consists of seven and five bars. They play without exactly knowing what they do. They can bind their high level of technical skill to a musical self-understanding and implement it, without it being controlled by their minds. When I asked them about the concept of their play, they told me, that the music slips through their fingers into the instrument. I understood then why they have such an impressive memory, because they exclude the path from their minds to the fingers and take the route from their guts to the fingers instead. Hence, the principle was based on intuition. The way their children learn to play the instruments is: they sit between the musicians' legs and the children's hands are lead over the instrument once they have internalized the musical sequence."

On Bali, Eberhard also experienced a new exposure to time. For six hours he listened to a gamelan concert by Agung Raka and watched an all night long Balinese shadow play where he could neither follow the language nor the content. He learned how to hold off without being impatient, and experience what it meant to retain impressions without making immediate use of them.

Most important, however, was the friendship with Agung Raka, the wise old prince. He was a master of the gamelan, the Balinese shadow theater and classical Balinese paintings, he carved his own masks and was a severe dance taskmaster. The full range of Balinese culture was united in him.

After several visits to Bali, it was clear to Eberhard that he and the gamelan orchestra of Prince Agung Raka would do something new. He spoke with drummer Pete York about it. A composition of traditional gamelan sounds, with Pete's rhythm and Eberhard's sensitive electronics, it would be exciting.

He also wanted to film a documentary about how the musicians approach each other with their different attitudes towards the other's conception. The film not only shows what happens, but it also interprets the music through images, a complex interaction and an opportunity to perform his music and bring it to a spiritual place.

In 1975, Eberhard Schoener bundled up the cables for his Moog and traveled to Bali with all the necessary equipment, along with Pete York, two engineers and a cameraman to the city of Denpasar in Bali.



Once they arrived, Balinese musicians were astonished when Pete York assembled his drum kit. Eberhard suggested it would be best if the musicians would welcome each other in the language of music; to bring everybody together. Then Pete began to play a furious drum solo. First, there was a giggle, followed by surprise - and then enthusiasm. In response, the Balinese drummers took up their instruments. Eberhard was smitten with this action, just as he had hoped; no intellectual debate, no overloaded discussions but a purely musical encounter that would later lead to a common work. The different rhythmic forms would serve as a basis for Eberhard's electronics.

When a Balinese musician was asked to repeat a certain phrase, he repeated the whole piece. Eberhard only wanted to hear certain parts of a piece, but that was not possible because it turned the Balinese musical understanding upside down.

And there was another problem. The gamelan musicians reacted to a dancer's movements, but they were unable to understand Eberhard's conducting. Agung Raka looked across to Eberhard and took over the mediation between Eberhard and the orchestra musicians without talking to Eberhard about it. During their friendship, few words were exchanged between the two men. They had a unique and an unusual understanding; a sort of secret language of gestures, signs and flair, and a common passion for art. Agung Raka, who was totally linked with his art to his tradition, understood Eberhard's intention and was able to get it across to everyone else. His musicians were following him.

Under the title "Bali Agung -or - The Other Time" the documentary was shown on German TV. Eberhard was awarded by the German evening newspaper DIE ZEIT in February 1976 with "the Star of the week". The LP was positively received. DIE ZEIT wrote, "The result is something entirely new: floating sounds and hard rhythms, both contemplative as a very exciting music of a very own kind".

Meanwhile, Eberhard pursued his aim of a joint tour. He went to Bali several times in the summertime to organize the documents for the musician's outward voyage.

Agung Raka and his musicians stayed calm and serene: Whether it would work or not, in any case the Gods would decide.

Eberhard: "Today, I am still deeply impressed and touched, when I imagine that these musicians were with me, not knowing where they would go, when they would return or what they would expect in a country which they were barely aware of and of which they knew almost nothing about. Some of them had not even left their home of Saba their entire lives."



### **TRACKLISTING:**

#### **CD:**

- |                      |       |
|----------------------|-------|
| 1. Tjandra           | 5:29  |
| 2. Rawana            | 2:58  |
| 3. Nadi              | 10:28 |
| 4. Suriya            | 3:31  |
| 5. Ramayana          | 3:11  |
| 6. Ketjak            | 2:12  |
| 7. Agung Raka-Dalang | 5:35  |
| 8. Gong-Gede         | 5:42  |

#### **DVD:**

Documentation: : „Bali Agung oder die andere Zeit“