
TITIK API: HARRY ROESLI, MUSIC, AND POLITICS IN BANDUNG, INDONESIA

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On June 5, 2009, a memorial concert was held at the Institute of Technology in Bandung (Institut Teknologi Bandung, hereafter ITB). Celebrated was the lifework of Djauhar Zaharsjah Fahrudin Roesli, popularly known as Harry Roesli. Harry Roesli was considered to be at the forefront of the so-called *tradisi baru*, or “new tradition,” of Indonesian artists committed to experimentation with traditional culture in order to address contemporary society.² For a variety of reasons, however, Roesli did not enjoy the level of popular success that other *tradisi baru* artists achieved, particularly playwright Willibrordus Surendra Broto Rendra (hereafter W. S. Rendra), director Putu Wijaya, novelist Remy Sylado, and musicians Guruh Soekarno Putra, Franki Raden, Leo Kristi, Slamet Abdul Syukur, Jack Lesmana, Nano Suratno, and, later, Iwan Gunawan.³

¹ “*Titik Api*” in my title is borrowed from the name of one of Roesli’s music albums and can be translated “Point of Fire.” My sincere gratitude is expressed to the Roesli family for their patience and generosity in providing me access to the Harry Roesli archive, as well as their willingness to discuss with me many of the finer points regarding his artistic career. I am also grateful to Michael Bodden, Barbara Hatley, Indra Ridwan, R. Anderson Sutton, Jeremy Wallach, and Andrew N. Weintraub for their critical comments on earlier versions of this article, which has been significantly improved as a result of their insights and notes. With that said, any remaining shortcomings are solely my responsibility.

² Cobina Gillitt Asmara, “Tradisi Baru: A ‘New Tradition’ of Indonesian Theatre,” *Asian Theatre Journal* 12,1 (1995): 164–74. The complete works of Harry Roesli are listed at the end of this essay.

³ For more on these dynamic artists, see, among others, Suka Hardjana, “Pekan Komponis, Sebuah Tawaran,” *Kompas*, November 20, 1988; Ellen Rafferty, “The New Tradition of Putu Wijaya,” *Indonesia* 49 (April 1990): 103–16; Craig A. Lockard, *Dance of Life: Popular Music and Politics in Southeast Asia* (Honolulu,

Besides gaining a reputation for contrarianism, Roesli was overstretched by a long-standing commitment to youth development as well as social work among Bandung's urban poor. These factors alone, however, cannot explain why Roesli's music was not a commercial success or why his notoriety in Indonesia did not extend beyond Jakarta and West Java (international performances and commissions notwithstanding). Other celebrated artists endured the stifling censorship of the Indonesian Ministry of Information (e.g., the artists W. S. Rendra and Putu Wijaya) and defended the urban poor (e.g., the artist Rhoma Irama). One notable difference between these artists and Roesli is that W. S. Rendra and Putu Wijaya wrote mostly in Indonesian, rather than in regional or ethnic Javanese and Balinese. Moreover, Nano S., a highly successful Sundanese composer, created a popular commercial music format that speaks to a wide audience and translates across regions, whereas the avant-garde compositions of Harry Roesli have not been widely disseminated and are ill-suited to the confines of the recording studio. Therefore, it is quite possible that, similar to author Ajip Rosidi from Majalengka, West Java, Harry Roesli's dedication to experimentation with Sundanese art, cultural themes, language, and musical forms limited his broad appeal in Indonesia, although it may have enhanced his novelty status abroad.

Roesli has been variably described as a "new tradition" musician (and one of Indonesia's foremost avant-garde composers), a jazz musician, a social critic, an early exponent of so called *pop berat* (heavy pop music), and an eclectic prodigy and raconteur; he has also been called egotistical, enigmatic, shocking, and audacious.⁴ These remarks are indicative of the complexity of Roesli's character and creativity, although they need to be rounded out with a detailed examination of the major events, experiences, and influences in his life. Drawing on the archives kept by Roesli's family in Bandung, this article tells the story of Harry Roesli the artist and social critic.⁵

HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1998); Sutanto Mendut, *Kosmologi Gendhing Gendheng: Intercosmolimagination* (Magelang: Indonesia Tera, 2002); David Bouchier and Vedi R. Hadiz, ed., *Indonesian Politics and Society: A Reader* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); Hera Diani, "Nano S. Continues the Music of His Ancestors," *Jakarta Post*, June 6, 2004; Asriat Ginting, *Musisiku* (Jakarta: Republika Penerbit, 2007); Sumarsam, "Music in Indonesian 'Historical' Films: Reading *Nopember 1828*," in *Global Soundtracks: Worlds of Film Music*, ed. Mark Slobin (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), pp. 217–40; Rolling Stone Indonesia, "The Immortals: 25 Artis Indonesia Terbesar Sepanjang Masa," *Rolling Stone Indonesia* 43 (November 2008); Barbara Hatley, "W. S. Rendra (1935–2009): The Peacock is No More," *Inside Indonesia* 97 (July–September 2009), available at: www.insideindonesia.org (accessed November 21, 2009); and M. Taufiqurrahman, "The Critic's Critic," *Jakarta Post*, October 29, 2009.

⁴ See Mary S. Zurbuchen, "Images of Culture and National Development in Indonesia: The Cockroach Opera," *Asia Theatre Journal* 7,2 (1990): 127–49; Martin Hatch, "Popular Music in Indonesia," in *World Music, Politics and Social Change*, ed. Simon Frith (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp. 47–68; Margot Cohen, "Eat Heavy, Dress Cool, Make Lots of Music," *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, June 25, 1993; Bart Barendregt and Wim van Zanten, "Popular Music in Indonesia since 1998, in Particular Fusion, Indie, and Islamic Music on Video Compact Disks and the Internet," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 34 (2002): 67–113; G. S. Prie, *Nama Tuhan di Sebuah Kuis* (Solo: Tiga Serangkai Pustaka Mandiri, 2003); Dieter Mack, *Zeitgenössische Musik in Indonesien: Zwischen Lokalen Traditionen, Nationalen Verpflichtungen und Internationalen Einflüssen* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2004); Asriat Ginting, *Musisiku*, pp. 141–47. Jeremy Wallach, *Modern Noise, Fluid Genres: Popular Music in Indonesia, 1997–2001* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008); and Rolling Stone Indonesia, "The Immortals."

⁵ The family's archive consists of hundreds of Indonesian language sources, primarily newspapers, tabloids, and weekly magazines. To guard against negative journalistic tendencies, such as hyperbole, conflicts of interest, factual inaccuracies, and the lack of objectivity or integrity, I crosschecked sources,

Similar to Rhoma Irama's *dangdut* music, Roesli's avant-garde performances and musical collaborations offer a "useful prism" through which to view Indonesian society (or, perhaps more accurately, Sundanese and Javanese society).⁶ Therefore, here I use a tripartite framework to examine the broad issues of nationalism, culture, social norms, and the arts in Indonesia. The three framing devices are musical innovation, politics and censorship, and social criticism. Musical innovation can be interpreted as a challenge to the status quo and an expression of freedom. Stagecraft and theatrical performances, live concerts, public poetry readings, and protest rallies with musical accompaniments often have a powerful ideational impact. This impact indirectly challenges hegemonic state discourses about ideal citizens, passivity, and deference to authority by contributing to a gradual shift in public preferences and political expectations. Musical innovation is, therefore, political, and the state typically responds to political threats and challenges with reactionary policies of repressive containment and censorship. In this context, Roesli was well positioned to challenge the New Order regime, using family connections, powerful patrons, and financial privileges to operate freely in what became a complex process of accommodation and opposition.

Musical Innovation

In the 1970s, Harry Roesli and guitarist Albert Warnerin began synchronizing pentatonic Sundanese *gamelan* with rock, electronic disco, funk, and cabaret dance music. Such innovations marked the continuation of an already well-established musical trend. In the 1930s, Daeng Sutigna, from Bandung, found that the traditional Sundanese *angklung* (a rectangular frame with suspended rattling bamboo tubes) resembled a Western handbell choir and cleverly tuned the *angklung* to a diatonic seven-tone scale.⁷ Sundanese *gamelan* artists such as Koko Koswara and R. Ading Affandie created new musical sounds, styles, and techniques in the 1950s.⁸ At the same time, Western artists were gaining greater notoriety by integrating *gamelan* into modern musical productions. New York's Wheeler Becket Orchestra, for instance, used Indonesian modal scales and performed successful demonstrations in Indonesia.⁹ A decade later, Father Henri Constant van Deinse, a Dutchman living in Semarang,

interviewed Roesli's family members, and enlisted the help of as many experts as possible in the fields of ethnomusicology, communications, and media studies.

⁶ *Dangdut* consists of "pulsating" dance rhythms and populist messages that resonate with a broad Indonesian audience. William H. Frederick, "Rhoma Irama and the Dangdut Style: Aspects of Contemporary Indonesian Popular Culture," *Indonesia* 34 (October 1982): 103–30.

⁷ Henry Spiller, *Gamelan: The Traditional Sounds of Indonesia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2004), pp. 138–40.

⁸ For more on the experimentation of "Mang" Koko Koswara and "Pak" Ading Affandie (both of whom praised the creativity of Harry Roesli), see, for instance, "Harry Roesli Akan Istirahat Dulu dari Segala Kegiatan Musik/Teater," *Pikiran Rakyat*, June 25, 1976; Sean Williams, "Current Developments in Sundanese Popular Music," *Asian Music* 21,1 (1989–90): 105–36; Deni Hermawan, "Kreativitas Mang Koko dan Masa Kini dalam Karawitan Sunda," *Jurnal Seni STSI Bandung* 5 (1996): 1–25; and Wim van Zanten, "God is Not Only in the Holy Scriptures, but Also in the Arts: Music, Cultural Policies, and Islam in West Java, Indonesia," presentation at Conference on Music in the World of Islam, Assilah, Morocco, August 8–13, 2007.

⁹ Harry S. Broudy, "Art, Science, and the New Values," *Music Educators Journal* 55,6 (1969): 83–95.

began experimenting with chromatic *gamelan* and modifying the Javanese tonal system.¹⁰ Roesli's shock-rock theatrical performances and avant-garde compositions were equally innovative and, as such, deserve further examination.

While in custody in 1972, Harry Roesli was asked by police whether his protest songs were genuine or simply designed for popular appeal. The unambiguous answer was "both."¹¹ Such frank admissions would become a Roesli hallmark, endearing him to the media and music audiences worldwide. For four decades, beginning in the 1970s, reporters clamored for access to Harry Roesli and never went away without a print-worthy story.



Harry Roesli appeared on the cover of Indonesia's popular music magazine *Aktuil*, July 11, 1977 (number 225)

¹⁰ See Suara Merdeka, "'Rock Karawitan'-nya Harry Rusli Main di Semarang," *Suara Merdeka*, December 21, 1976; and "Soepra Gamelan Has a Western Sound," *Jakarta Post*, August 4, 2005.

¹¹ "Harry Rusli: Protes dan Popularitas," *Ultra*, 1973. The first of many arrests resulted from a rendition of *Tuan Presiden* (Mr. President), a mildly satirical song about former President Suharto.

Harry Roesli came from a distinguished pedigree, gaining an appreciation for poetry and literature from his grandfather Marah Roesli.¹² Tatang Kartiwa, a prominent Sundanese *gamelan* performer, worked with Harry Roesli while he was still in secondary school, encouraging him to register with the Konservatori Karawitan Indonesia (Classical Arts Conservatory of Indonesia), in Bandung.¹³

While studying electrical engineering at ITB in 1971, Harry Roesli established a group called Harry Roesli and His Gang, and this band released their first long-playing phonograph record (LP) *Philosophy of Rock* that same year.¹⁴ In August 1973, Harry and the gang caught the attention of music critics during their performance at the *Summer 28* festival, held in Ragunan, Pasar Minggu, Jakarta. To my knowledge, the earliest review of performances by Harry Roesli and His Gang is contained in the national newspaper *Kompas* (Compass).¹⁵ While the band was deemed collectively deficient, the reviewer noted great potential, with Harry Roesli providing lively and fresh vocals. The songs “Peacock Dog” and “Nyamuk Malaria” (Malaria Mosquito), in particular, grabbed the attention of audiences and music critics. The band’s real breakthrough came in 1975, with the live staging of *Ken Arok*, a controversial operatic adaptation of the classic East Javanese legend that introduced Indonesian audiences to a new form of “shock rock *gamelan*.”¹⁶

¹² Marah Roesli’s most famous novel was *Siti Nurbaya*, first published by Balai Pustaka in 1922. This best-seller marked the inauguration of a new period in Indonesian literature, a genre based on real political and economic conditions and featuring contemporary protagonists. See Andries Teeuw, “The Impact of Balai Pustaka on Modern Indonesian Literature,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 35,1 (1972): 111–27; and Cohen, “Eat Heavy, Dress Cool, Make Lots of Music,” p. 11. While studying at ITB, Harry Roesli often joined acclaimed playwright W. S. Rendra in public readings of poetry, leading to Roesli being arrested several times. Roesli also appreciated the famous works of W. B. Yeats and W. H. Auden, as well as the “energetic prose” of Indonesian poet Gerson Poyk. For a sample of Poyk’s work, see Gerson Poyk and Mary Lou Wang, “The Love Letters of Alexander Rajaguguk (Surat-Surat Cinta Aleksander Rajaguguk),” *Indonesia* 43 (April 1987): 31–42; and Gerson Poyk, *Sang Guru* (Jakarta: Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia, 1993).

¹³ See Bens Leo, “Menginterogasi Harry Roesli: Snobism itu Perlu!” *Aktuil*, June 1977; and “Saya Ingin Jadi Pispot,” *Tempo*, July 9, 1977. For a discussion of *karawitan*, which refers to traditional or classical Javanese and Sundanese music, as well as a body of theory and philosophy of *gamelan* ensembles (including vocals, notation, and inscription), see, for instance, Andrew N. Weintraub, “Constructing the Popular: Superstars, Performance, and Cultural Authority in Sundanese Wayang Golek Purwa of West Java, Indonesia” (PhD dissertation, University of California–Berkeley, 1997); and Henry Spiller, *Focus: Gamelan Music of Indonesia*, second edition (London: Routledge, 2008). For analysis of the post-independence artistic revival in Indonesia, which revolved around the dual axis of Bandung and Yogyakarta, see, among others, Claire Holt, *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967); and Kenneth M. George, “Some Things that have Happened to the Sun after September 1965: Politics and the Interpretation of an Indonesian Painting,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39,4 (1997): 603–34.

¹⁴ Harry Roesli’s early phonograph recordings were sponsored by Robert Wong, a financier who reportedly owned fifteen shipping companies in Indonesia. See “Harry Rusli: Protes dan Popularitas.”

¹⁵ See “The Gang of Harry Rusli,” *Kompas*, August 23, 1973. In the performance review, Harry Roesli’s voice was likened to Chris Farlowe from the group *Colloseum*. German pop music critic Rudy Cio compared the musical force of Harry Roesli to that of the heavy rock band *Atomic Rooster*, a comparison that Roesli rejected. See also “Harry Rusli: Protes dan Popularitas.”

¹⁶ Harry Roesli chose a musical adaptation of *Ken Arok* after reading about it in the magazine *Si Kuncung*, a magazine designed for secondary school students. For a detailed analysis of the original *Ken Arok* legend, see Miguel Covarrubias, *Island of Bali* (New York, NY: Alfred Knopf, 1937), pp. 202–4. In short, this thirteenth-century epic focuses on a bandit named Ken Arok who claimed the throne of the kingdom of Kediri in East Java. Ken Arok married the beauty Ken Dedes and eventually suffered the curse of a magic *keris* (traditional dagger).



Original advertisement for Harry Roesli's *Ken Arok*, first performed at the Independence Building, on Jalan (Street) Asia Afrika, in Bandung, April 12, 1975.

Following *Ken Arok*'s premier at Bandung's Gedung Merdeka (Independence Building) on April 12, 1975, *Ken Arok* ran for several months in Bandung and Jakarta, making headlines and drawing large audiences to venues such as Taman Ismail Marzuki, the Senayan Convention Hall, and Balai Sidang, in Jakarta.¹⁷ The show's content was humorous and lewd, the musical pitch and volume levels were intentionally designed to make viewers feel uncomfortable, and the sequence of events portrayed by Harry Roesli resonated with audience members' everyday lives, as official bribery and corruption were rife.¹⁸ Roesli deliberately arranged the

¹⁷ Drs. Nana Darmana, the head of the Provincial Office for Preserving the Arts in Bandung, after having received approval from the relevant government agencies, issued ordinance number 465/A-I/KPK/1975, dated March 26, which celebrated and endorsed the *Ken Arok* rock opera at Gedung Merdeka.

¹⁸ The *Ken Arok* performances received significant media coverage. See, for instance, "Setelah 'Ken Arok' Lalu 'Siti Nurbaya,'" *Sinar Harapan*, April 21, 1975; "Ken Arok dalam Rock: Dipentaskan Harry Rusli di Bandung," *VISTA* 265 (July 1975); Risanto, "'Rock Opera' Ken Arok mau Masyhur mau Jorok," *Sinar Harapan*, August 9, 1975; "Nonton Opera Ken Arok: Apa Maunya Harry Rusli?" *Pos Muda Mudi*, August 11, 1975; "Aliran Baru, Pispot Namanya," *Tempo*, September 6, 1975; Masheri Mansyur, "Rock Opera Ken

performances at Bandung's Independence Building so as to cause confusion and frustration, for instance, by draping long curtains and dangling *wayang* puppets all around the venue, shining bright spotlights straight at the audience, and periodically singing at a piercingly high pitch. The opening act of the rock opera involved a deranged clown giving instructions to the audience (a sold-out show had an audience of eight hundred people) and explaining in technical detail how the performance would unfold. This was followed by a frenzy of activity on stage, with the dancers and musicians taking the stage, followed at last by the conductor, Harry Roesli.

With the stage unlit and totally dark, the haunting music began with the subtle sounds of coins clinking together, then intersecting with the plucking of guitar strings and the soft ringing of Chinese bells. Suddenly giant bolts of fabric were released from the ceiling and were suspended just above the heads of the audience, deliberately invading their private space.¹⁹ Ear-stinging reverberations and distortions were then pounded out of the venue's 4,000 watt sound system. The reason, according to Roesli, was that dwarfing and overpowering the audience would actually enhance their experience, focusing their attention on all aspects of the dramatic performance, making them self-conscious and ensuring that there was no complacency or unplanned distractions. Ideally, from Roesli's perspective, by the end of the performance the audience would be stupefied and there would be no applause at all. Roesli conceded that there was always plenty of applause for *Ken Arok*, and therefore his ultimate goal was never achieved.²⁰

No fewer than forty performers and forty backstage crew members were required for each *Ken Arok* performance, which fused traditional Sundanese instruments, *wayang golek* (wooden puppet theater), and *gondang* (drum and dance) with modern rock, blues, and cabaret.²¹ Typical rock instruments such as guitar, bass, keyboard, and drums were used alongside a range of Sundanese instruments to augment traditional sounds and to expand the musical repertoire of Indonesian artists.²² Many music critics

Arok: Suguhan Lucu Anak Nakal," *Junior* 65 (September 1975); "Opera Ken Arok Rugi Sekitar Rp 103 Juta," *Pikiran Rakyat*, 1975; Rendra, "Salam Pembaca!" *Pikiran Rakyat*, March 17, 1976; Oetari Oesman, "Di GOR Jateng: 'Rock Opera'-nya Harry Rusli Kena Sensor," *Suara Merdeka*, December 1976; "Harry Roesli akan Istirahat Dulu dari Segala Kegiatan Musik/Teater"; and "Harry Roesli: Publik Dikecilkan Lewat 'Musik Elektronik,'" *Gadis*, 1978.

¹⁹ According to Michael Bodden, Roesli's early musical experimentation is reminiscent of the combined themes of Brechtian alienation and Artaudian cruelty techniques that were pursued by numerous avant-garde writers and directors from the 1960s onward (personal communication, December 2009). See also Michael Bodden, "Brecht in Asia: New Agendas, National Traditions, and Critical Consciousness," in *A Bertolt Brecht Reference Companion*, ed. Siegfried Mews (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), pp. 379–98.

²⁰ See "Harry Roesli: Publik Dikecilkan Lewat 'Musik Elektronik.'"

²¹ *Wayang* puppet theater is famous throughout Indonesia. Sundanese *wayang golek* (wooden) differs from Javanese *wayang kulit* (leather, used in shadow plays) in a variety of ways. See, among others, Ward Keeler, *Javanese Shadow Plays, Javanese Selves* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986); and Andrew N. Weintraub, *Power Plays: Wayang Golek Puppet Theatre of West Java* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004).

²² Some of the traditional Sundanese instruments used in Roesli's *gamelan* ensemble included Chinese and Sundanese gongs, the *bonang panerus* (tuned inverted bronze bowls and gong kettles set in short rows), *kacapi rincik* (a wooden zither that reaches high frequencies), *saron* and *peking* (metallophone instruments), *kendang* (a set of three double-headed drums), *timpani* (percussions), *rebab* (spike fiddle), *suling* (bamboo flute) and *tarompet* (oboe-like instrument used for *pencak silat*, a Sundanese form of martial arts).

and journalists compared *Ken Arok* to Broadway director Tom O'Horgan's 1971 staging of the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar*, insisting that Roesli must have been influenced by this performance, although Roesli denied ever seeing the musical. Moreover, Roesli claimed that music promoters from *Aktuil* coined the term "rock opera," whereas he felt more comfortable describing *Ken Arok* as contemporary *wayang*, electronic *gondang*, or electric *ludruk* (Javanese folk theater).²³

Traditionalists, such as the Sundanese composer Machjar Angga Kusumadinata, and some of Roesli's former teachers from the Karawitan Conservatory in Bandung, were critical of these new experiments with Sundanese instruments and dances.²⁴ In response, Roesli conceded that, technically, the *slendro* and *pelog* tones of the *gamelan* are clearly different and incompatible with a Western diatonic tuning, although this is precisely the motivation behind projects such as *Ken Arok*.²⁵ Musicians must be able to improvise; for instance, when a *gamelan* ballad enters a tone that an organ can not reproduce, harmonics can be used to bridge the gap. More importantly, by fusing traditional and modern sounds, artists such as Roesli introduced a young audience to *gamelan* and, in a sense, revived traditional Sundanese music, an achievement that the teachers from the Karawitan Conservatory often failed to replicate.

Harry Roesli strove to create a "total experience" with his music, focusing on the intricacies of lyrical composition, tonal systems, and dramatic stage performances while encouraging young musicians and his band mates in Bandung to experiment with new sounds and styles. Roesli typically wrote the lyrics first (sometimes agonizing for weeks at a time over a single verse) and then collaborated with band members to create the accompanying musical arrangement. Music was but one medium of communication, however, and, for Roesli, the overall composition involved experimentation, conceptualization, analysis, and concentration.²⁶ While Roesli's artistic creations were intended to be inclusive and open to all audiences, and always contained critical and socially relevant messages, they were never popular (in the mainstream sense) or commercially successful. Moreover, when it came to the purely technical aspects of musical composition and the fusion of diatonic and pentatonic scales, Roesli was the first to admit that artists such as Guruh Soekarno Putra, from

²³ Leo, "Menginterogasi Harry Roesli." For more on *ludruk*, see James L. Peacock, "Ritual, Entertainment, and Modernization: A Javanese Case," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 10,3 (1968): 328–34; and Barbara Hatley, "Wayang and Ludruk: Polarities in Java," *The Drama Review* 15,2 (1971): 88–101.

²⁴ Pak Machjar, a prominent artist that Harry Roesli admired, reportedly asked Roesli to stop performing because his music was causing "hearing damage" (see "Harry Roesli: Publik Dikecilkan Lewat 'Musik Elektronik'" and Bens Leo, "Menginterogasi Harry Roesli.") This was an aesthetic critique, although the endless hours of rehearsals and jam sessions taking place at the Roesli studio on Jalan Supratman reportedly (perhaps hyperbolically) led to the hospitalization of one exacerbated neighbor, friends fainting while listening to *timpani* percussions, and one young aficionado suffering a nervous breakdown.

²⁵ For a technical comparison of pentatonic and diatonic music, as well as *slendro* and *pelog*, see Robert Gauldin, "The Cycle-7 Complex: Relations of Diatonic Set Theory to the Evolution of Ancient Tonal Systems," *Music Theory Spectrum* 5 (1983): 39–55; Norman Carey and David Clampitt, "Aspects of Well-Formed Scales," *Music Theory Spectrum* 11,2 (1989): 187–206; and John Clough, Jack Douthett, N. Ramanathan, and Lewis Rowell, "Early Indian Heptatonic Scales and Recent Diatonic Theory," *Music Theory Spectrum* 15,1 (1993): 36–58.

²⁶ Johannes Simbolon, "Harry Composes a Melody with Audience," *The Jakarta Post*, September 3, 1995, p. 8. Sri Raharti, "Harry Roesli: Renyah Tapi Bandel," *Forum Keadilan* 9 (August 1997): 67.

Bali, and Slamet Abdul Syukur, from Bandung, were much more proficient than he was.

Perfumed Classes

To celebrate the first anniversary of the *Ken Arok* rock opera as well as the release of a new album, *Titik Api* (Point of Fire), Harry Roesli organized an event at Bandung's Dago Tea House art park in April 1976.²⁷ Whereas most emerging musicians preferred to keep exclusive company and hold disco parties in luxurious settings, Roesli had an open guest list and insisted on inviting hundreds of *anak-anak jalanan* (street children) to compete in a musical event called *Festival Baramaen* (Beggars Festival). Rather than hiring a catering service, salted watermelon seeds and ginger sweets were handed out to guests, and *pedagang kaki lima* (local traders and peddlers) were allowed to set up food stalls throughout the historic venue to sell their goods, mainly *tahu*, *mie baso*, and *bajigur* (tofu, meatballs with noodles, and a sweet coconut drink). All guests were encouraged to wear sarongs and sample traditional foods, and the stage was open for anyone to dance and perform, including *waria* (transgendered cross-dressers, or "ladyboys") and Sundanese *gamelan* artists. Members of the Bandung elite, or "perfumed classes," as Roesli once called them, were shocked by the manner of celebration and the odors carried by the vagrants.



The main stage at Dago Tea House, in north Bandung, 2009

²⁷ Ateng Z. Andaya, "Ulang Tahun Teater Ken Arok Harry Rusli di Dago," *Pikiran Rakyat*, April 14, 1976.

In December 1976, the state censorial apparatus prevented Harry Roesli's ensemble from finishing its performance during a celebratory concert in Semarang, Central Java. Cobra Optical was holding an annual promotional event to crown the "eyeglasses queen" of Indonesia.²⁸ Grace Simon, Indonesia's most famous pop star at the time, was booked to perform, along with Harry Roesli and his band, now appearing under the name Kharisma. Kharisma consisted of approximately sixty young musicians and dancers, mainly from ITB and the University of Padjadjaran (UNPAD), in Bandung. Promotional banners throughout Semarang boasted that the "king of controversy from Bandung" would be performing at the sports arena. While Kharisma was able to take the stage and began its scheduled performance, after the third act (of a planned four) police intervened, citing "rude and impolite" content in Roesli's theatrical drama.²⁹ The audience was, indeed, shocked by this new form of rock *gamelan* and music drama, although the public proved generally receptive to Kharisma and protested the police ban.

Between 1975 and 1977, Harry Roesli abandoned electrical engineering at ITB to focus on musical composition and to study at Lembaga Pendidikan Kesenian Jakarta (Jakarta Art Education Institute), now referred to as the Institut Kesenian Jakarta (Jakarta Art Institute). Throughout 1977, Kharisma often performed in Bandung's Monticelli Club and also toured West Java as part of Golkar's (Golongan Karya, Party of Functional Groups) public-relations campaign.³⁰ The events and pressures of this period provide some indication of Roesli's emerging dilemma. In the spirit of the Faustian bargain, Roesli had succumbed (at least partially) to intense pressures from peers and powerful patrons of the Suharto regime. (Because everyone "knew" that elections were fixed, public-relations activities and efforts were used to legitimize the monopoly of power exercised by Golkar party members.) Cooptation of popular artists was one component of Golkar's public-relations initiative, since association with popular public figures could blunt social criticism. For Roesli, the trade-off involved pledging nominal support for Golkar in exchange for being allowed to perform and compose music independently. That arrangement might have had some bearing on the commercial invitations extended to Roesli during the late 1970s. Roesli was strategically placed within the New Order political constellation, able to draw upon influential family relations, secure record contracts, and benefit from international academic scholarships. Roesli's mother and three siblings were doctors and

²⁸ See "'Rock Karawitan'-nya Harry Rusli Main di Semarang," *Suara Merdeka*, December 21, 1976; "Grup Harry Rusli Bandung Turun Panggung di Semarang," *Pikiran Rakyat*, December 30, 1976; Oetari Oesman, "Di GOR Jateng"; and Daniel Alexey, "Harry Roesli: Mereka bukan Penonton Saya," *TOP*, December 1976.

²⁹ Lieutenant Colonel R. Soemarno enacted the gag order (officially registered as Dan. Sat. Samapta Komtabes 091 Semarang) that banned Harry Roesli from finishing his performance because of "public safety concerns." Samapta is a military term for "ready" and "prepared," while Komtabes is an abbreviation for Metropolitan Police Command. Harry Roesli claimed that his ensemble tried to reduce the amount of provocative content in the performance (e.g., coarse language, sexual imagery) without styming the group's artistic creativity, improvisation, and spontaneity.

³⁰ Tatang RS, "Harry Roesli: Saya Ingin Turut Andil Sukseskan Team Safari 'Bianglala' Golkar," *Pikiran Rakyat*, March 1977; and "Monticelli Club Perlu 9 Mikropoon," *Sinar Harapan*, June 22, 1977. The political party Golkar was led by President Suharto from 1968–98. Harry Roesli, despite gaining a reputation as a fierce social critic and political satirist, was asked by acclaimed Sundanese musician R. Ading Affandi to join Golkar's traveling "rainbow safari" team, and was scheduled to perform for audiences in the districts and cities of Bandung, Ciamis, Cirebon, Indramayu, Kuningan, Majalaya, Subang, Sumedang, and Tasikmalaya. Ill health, however, prevented Roesli from completing the tour.

veterinarians, for instance, while his father, Roeshan Roesli, was a major general in the Indonesian armed forces and a cousin of B. J. Habibie (Indonesian president, 1998–99). Harry Roesli's symbolic acts of goodwill towards the regime were balanced with audacious social critiques, and he engaged in a lifelong struggle for truth and justice, even when doing so proved detrimental to his career or popularity.

In 1977, Harry Roesli was contacted by Amin Cengli, of Musika Studio, and offered a lucrative one-year contract with complete artistic license and unlimited studio time.³¹ It was expected that Roesli could produce four albums in this time, an unrealistic target to be sure, although *Lemah Kingkin* (The Grieving Land) and *Tiga Bendera* (Three Flags) were released in 1977, followed by *Lima Tahun Oposisi* (Five Years of Opposition) in 1978. There was a lot of competition at this time, as many artists were joining the mainstream, making television appearances, and compromising some of their creative values for the sake of commercial appeal and success in the emerging industry, which expanded in Indonesia through the 1970s thanks to increased sales of music cassettes and growing audiences for performances that fused pop rock with traditional music. Agents and promoters were gaining a foothold in creative centers such as Bandung, courting local artists, and consolidating the music industry.³² In response, Suka Hardjana, a musician and music critic from Yogyakarta, helped inspire the *musik kontemporer* (contemporary music) movement in Indonesia in the late 1970s. Hardjana accused the Indonesian music industry of total commercialization, and called the mass media "poisonous," arguing passionately for a revival of Indonesian art.³³

Idris Sardi, Enteng Tanamal, and other successful film directors and musicians visited Musika Studio in 1977 and expressed an interest in working with Roesli. An unexpected invitation from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), followed by a proposition from a Dutch talent scout, however, put all of Roesli's domestic projects on hold and provided him with a temporary solution to the dilemma of artistic integrity versus commercial success. In June 1977, the BBC's Brian Nepnew hosted a program called "A Look at the World of Contemporary Music."³⁴ For the Asian segment, artists

³¹ After accepting the contract, Roesli joked that Amin Cengli "must be the biggest risk-taker in the country" (Bens Leo, "Menginterogasi Harry Roesli").

³² In 1977, Roesli declined an invitation from Eros Djarot to hold a music festival where the artists could challenge one another during performances. While clearly appreciating the talent of Djarot (who went on to make a name in the film industry and with the banned publication *DeTIK*), Roesli felt that Djarot's lyrics were "excessively vicious and coarse" at times, particularly in the song "Superstar Tango." Roesli also wrote offensive lyrics, but always took care to add a humorous element to his songs, for instance, satirizing the *dangdut* artist Rhoma Irama. The true master was Guruh Soekarno Putra, whose "Gipsy Musik" was electrifying and whose lyrics were "simply the best" (see Bens Leo, "Menginterogasi Harry Roesli"; and "Harry Roesli: Malaria 78," *Gadis*, July 21, 1978). Harry Roesli was surprised and somewhat disturbed to see W. S. Rendra making a guest appearance to read poetry during one of Rhoma Irama's televised *dangdut* concerts, an event organized by the Yukawi Corporation, one of Indonesia's largest record companies. For details, see Frederick, "Rhoma Irama and the Dangdut Style," pp. 103–5; and Andrew N. Weintraub, "Dangdut Soul: Who are 'the People' in Indonesian Popular Music?" *Asian Journal of Communication* 16,4 (2006): 411–31.

³³ "Suka Hardjana: Dunia Musik Indonesia Melulu Dunia Dagang," *Kompas*, July 30, 1980. Harry Roesli was delighted when his records sold (whether legitimately or in one of Bandung's numerous black markets where pirated music was available), although he refused to compose "thin" or "artificial" pop music for the sake of commercial success. Rather, Roesli preferred to host free music festivals, gave free music lessons, participated in protest rallies at ITB, organized benefit concerts or public-awareness campaigns, and even maintained a cleaning service to generate some extra income.

³⁴ Boy Hendratno, "Harry, Jopie dan Idris di BBC London," *Aktuil*, June 1977.

from Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, and Thailand submitted recordings. After reviewing all the material, the exemplars came from Japan and Indonesia. Japanese jazz bassist Nakamura impressed BBC executives, and Nepnew described Roesli as a “sensational musician,” along with Indonesian guitarist Yopie Item and violinist Idris Sardi. It was expected that these artists could penetrate the North American and European markets, even if their music was underappreciated in Asia. Soon after, Alfons van Logello, a talent scout and musician from the Netherlands, selected four Indonesian musicians—Harry Roesli, Idris Sardi, Guruh Soekarno Putra, and Leo Kristi—and offered them scholarships to study at the Rotterdam Conservatory (only Roesli accepted).³⁵

Between 1977 and 1981, while in his late twenties, Roesli balanced intensive studies in electronic music with his obligations in Bandung. One of the trends that swept Bandung in the late 1970s was unabashed patriotism, with thousands of houses and cars adorned with red and white flags proclaiming *Indonesia Aku Cinta Kamu* (Indonesia I Love You), followed by Harry Roesli’s signature. In 1978, Roesli exemplified this patriotic trend with the release of his album *Jangan Menangis Indonesia* (Don’t Cry Indonesia).³⁶ Roesli married Kania Perdani Handiman in 1980 and celebrated the birth of twin sons in 1982.³⁷ Despite these new family responsibilities, Roesli continued to collaborate with musicians from Bandung throughout the duration of his enrollment at the Rotterdam Conservatory.

Lutung Kasarung

One must pass an entrance exam to enroll in Rotterdam Conservatory, and for his exam Roesli opted to perform a rock-music adaptation of the Sundanese legend *Lutung Kasarung* (The Lost Black Monkey).³⁸ Admittedly underprepared and without any real foundation for formal studies, Roesli continued his early work with Sundanese *gamelan* and rock music. While in Rotterdam, Roesli was able to refine his skills, add theoretical, technical, and notational dimensions to his music, and have a great deal of fun performing with European classmates. For adaptations of *Lutung Kasarung*, Roesli played the *dalang* (master conductor of *wayang* puppet theater), sometimes donning a complete monkey costume from Indonesia and dressing his mock Javanese court

³⁵ Funding for the scholarships came from the Dutch Ministerie Cultuur, Recreatie, en Maatschappelijk Werk.

³⁶ See “Harry Roesli: Malaria 78” and “Menyelami Kejujuran Harry Roesli: ‘Aku Nggak Pernah Bisa Bikin Lagu Manis,’” *Gadis*, 1979.

³⁷ For a family profile, see “Harry Roesli–Kania: Sebelum Kenal, Jailangkung Sudah ‘Memberi Tahu’ Siapa Jodoh Kania,” *Bintang* 210 (March 1995): 1; and “Harry Roesli (Bagian II): Dikirim ke Belanda Supaya Tak Lagi Berurusan Dengan Penjara,” *Bintang* 267 (April 14, 1996): 4.

³⁸ See “Menyelami Kejujuran Harry Roesli.” *Lutung Kasarung* is an old Sundanese story told in the genre of *pantun Sunda*. Traditional *pantun* performances in West Java have been described as serene, requiring a highly attentive audience able to listen to the stories and melodies chanted by the bard (narrator). Given that contemporary audiences find this style monotonous and even boring, traditional *pantun* performances are being abandoned. See Ajip Rosidi, “My Experiences in Recording ‘Pantun Sunda,’” *Indonesia* 16 (October 1973): 105–11; and Andrew N. Weintraub, “Tune, Text, and the Function of Lagu in Pantun Sunda, A Sundanese Oral Narrative Tradition,” *Asian Music* 26,1 (1994–95): 175–211.

officials in martial arts shirts.³⁹ It was, according to Roesli, “strange and foolish,” although everyone involved thoroughly enjoyed the experience.⁴⁰ Other collaborations that Roesli organized included the formation of a music group called Masa Depan Anak Muda (The Future of the Young Generation) with Ambonese artists living in the Netherlands, as well as projects with Greek musicians from the Rotterdam Conservatory.

While on leave from the Rotterdam Conservatory in the summer of 1980, Roesli performed *Musik Bunyi Harry Roesli* (Musical Sounds of Harry Roesli, also referred to as Hospital Music) at Taman Ismail Marzuki, in Jakarta, from July 30 to August 1. Each show lasted for seventy-five breathless minutes and consisted of eighteen episodes, leaving audiences deafened but entertained and in good humor. Slamet Abdul Syukur summed up the experience of listening to the musical sounds of Harry Roesli as being like “meditating in the middle of a marketplace.”⁴¹ Audiences were treated to an array of unusual, crosscutting sounds and highly experimental performances from Roesli’s ensemble of forty musicians. Syukur, a prominent musician from Bandung, reported that there was “no musical equivalent” and only a tablature dictionary could help make sense of the complexity of sounds swirling throughout the auditorium. “Every object has the potential to become a musical instrument,” insisted Roesli.⁴² Indeed, during the *Bunyi* performances, traditional sounds from Sundanese *gamelan* and hard-rock instruments were augmented with sounds from shattered porcelain fragments, paper being torn, thick sheets of plastic being shaken and twisted, gongs struck with chains, tin cans being thrown about and bottles smashed, and water gushing from barrels. Essentially, Roesli was determined to go beyond the script, beyond literal readings of chords and tablature, with the hope that the artists could sustain an avant-garde performance based on real emotions and connections to the music and sounds, as well as on aesthetics and improvisation. Building on “audience suffocation” and “cruelty” techniques used during the staging of *Ken Arok*, Roesli again attempted to squeeze the audience with bombastic sounds, fluctuating vocals (soft and polite followed by piercing and rude), and the deployment of dancing acrobats inches away from the crowd, all in order to confound and stupefy people. Several of Roesli’s contemporaries concluded that this level of creative license was the result of a “John Cage hangover.”⁴³

³⁹ For more on Sundanese *dalang*, see Kathy Foley, “The Sundanese Wayang Golek: The Rod Puppet Theatre of West Java” (PhD dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1979); and Weintraub, *Power Plays*, pp. 22–23.

⁴⁰ “Harry Roesli (Bagian III): Sudah Menghapus Semua Obsesi,” *Bintang* 268 (April 21, 1996): p. 4.

⁴¹ Slamet A. Syukur, “Musik Bunyi Harry Roesli: Ibarat Orang Bertapa di Tengah Pasar,” *Kompas*, August 2, 1980; and “Sehari Dengan Harry Roesli: Masih Berduka Cita,” *Zaman*, July 23, 1983, pp. 22–26.

⁴² Syukur, “Musik Bunyi Harry Roesli.” On the performance brochure, Harry Roesli summarized the concept for *Bunyi* as a distorted version of the life cycle: *lahir, jalan, kecelakaan, mati, hidup, berjuang—tidak ingin mati—tanda tangan* (be born, walk, have an accident, die, live, struggle—don’t want to die—signature).

⁴³ In 1983, Era, a correspondent from *Zaman*, an Indonesian magazine, was given permission to rummage through Roesli’s bedroom. He found ashtrays filled with *kretek* (clove) cigarette butts; books by J. van Ackere, John Cage, and Don Sebesky; a Dutch–Indonesian dictionary; guides to music notation and tablature; and hundreds of old jazz and classical records. See “Sehari Dengan Harry Roesli,” p. 22; and Cohen, “Eat Heavy, Dress Cool, Make Lots of Music,” p. 11. For half a century (1942–92), John Cage had an immense impact on the arts. A subversive figure, Cage challenged the foundations of musical art with

In addition to Western influences (e.g., John Cage, Miles Davis, Frank Zappa), Harry Roesli drew on Sundanese traditions as well as the history of Bandung—the *kota kembang* (city of flowers), center of ancient Padjadjaran, Parahyangan, and Pasundan, the *Paris van Java*—for artistic inspiration. In reference to the spirit of revolutionary Bandung, for instance, Roesli often sang of the *lautan api* (sea of fire)—the time when residents torched the city to prevent Dutch forces from reoccupying it.⁴⁴ Ismail Marzuki's classic song "Rayuan Pulau Kelapa" (Solace on Coconut Island) was also turned into a lament for the Indonesian archipelago in Roesli's "Pulau Kelapa Merayu" (Seduced on Coconut Island).⁴⁵ By the early 1980s, Roesli's theatrical performances were gaining greater recognition for their dynamic, multidimensional nature. One music review contained in the newspaper *Sinar Harapan* (Ray of Hope) paints a vivid portrait of Roesli's live show.⁴⁶ To paraphrase, Roesli's *Lautan Api* was mischievous, offensive, strident, agonizingly loud and boisterous, unique and comedic, filled with parody and insight, interactive and brilliant. The dancers were striking and provocative, the lyrics and narrations were alternately poetic and vulgar, mocking and sincere. Audience members experienced joy, sadness, anger, and astonishment, and were often seen "wrinkling their foreheads." Engaging with the social disorder that gripped metropolitan Indonesia, Roesli saw Indonesia with sharp eyes, and attempted to elevate the level of public discourse through songs that communicated and engaged with the audience, stripping away all pretenses and self-indulgent vanities. The finale included an emotional rendering of "Jangan Menangis Indonesia" (Don't Cry Indonesia), performed in a venue that was completely dark except for a single ray of light illuminating Roesli's face as he sat alone on stage singing his haunting lyrics with crystalline vocals. For those present, it was deeply moving and heartfelt, and an eerie sensation enveloped the auditorium as each rhythm and subtle chime transfixed viewers.

Having completed his studies in Rotterdam, Roesli established a new musical association called the Bandung Creative Arts Center (Depot Kreasi Seni Bandung, DKSB) in November 1981, headquartered at his studio on Jalan Supratman.⁴⁷

radical notions about the anarchic structure of sounds and composition. One of Cage's "monumental" works was *Europerras 1&2*. See, for instance, Mark Swed, "John Cage: A Celebration," *The Musical Times* 129,1748 (1988): 516–18; Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Ian Pepper, "John Cage, or Liberated Music," *October* 82 (Autumn 1997): 48–61; and John Cage, "Reflections of a Progressive Composer on a Damaged Society," *October* 82 (Autumn 1997): 77–93.

⁴⁴ For a classic study of the independence struggle in Bandung, see John Smail, *Bandung in the Early Revolution, 1945–1946: A Study in the Social History of the Indonesian Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1964). For a provocative account of revolutionary Bandung, see Raymond Westerling, *Challenge to Terror*, trans. Waverley Root (London: William Kimber, 1952). Bandung was also the venue for the first Asia-Africa Conference in 1955, leading to the formation of the nonaligned movement. See, for example, Roeslan Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection: The Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung in 1955* (Singapore: Gunung Agung, 1981).

⁴⁵ In an adaptation of Marzuki's original 1944 version, Roesli wrote: "*Kelapa yang dulu merayu tak lagi merdu, tak terasa sejuk*" (coconuts that were once persuasive [attractive] are no longer melodious, don't feel cool [in the breeze]).

⁴⁶ Hernia Abortus, "Leo Kristi-Harry Roesli-Guruh Soekarno: Menatap Wajah Indonesia," *Sinar Harapan*, September 28, 1980.

⁴⁷ "Lebih Jauh Dengan Harry Roesli," *Kompas*, September 10, 1995, p. 2. Occasionally, DKSB was humorously referred to as the "Depot Kleaning Service Bandung" by Roesli and his associates.



The Roesli studio, a *rumah Belanda* (Dutch house) built in 1920, currently hosts the Harry Roesli Foundation, Harry Roesli's House of Music, the Bandung Creative Arts Center (DKSB), and Salsa Quarter Bandung

Besides attracting the best musicians from Indonesia and leading to a variety of musical collaborations and performances, DKSB became a social forum as well as a refuge for young artists and those escaping the trappings of life on the street (crime, drugs, and prostitution).⁴⁸ Roesli continued to compose and perform electronic rock operas at a feverish pace during the early 1980s, drawing significant crowds to *Sikat Gigi* (Toothbrush [Music]). *Sikat Gigi*, as performed at Gelora Saperua in Bandung on January 9, 1982, involved an elaborate collaboration with Putu Wijaya's Teater Mandiri (Independent Theater) and required no less than 250 musicians, dancers, and artists.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ By 1998, DKSB had over 6,000 registered members. Roesli offered formal lessons every Wednesday to aspiring musicians. While anyone was welcome, there were strict rules against drunkenness and narcotics. Otherwise, it was an open forum for discussions of social and political problems as well as musical training and artistic expression. See, for instance, "Harry Roesli, Berkah Pengamen," *Kompas*, August 29, 1998.

⁴⁹ "Sikat Gigi'nya Harry Roesli: Kali Ini Tidak Terlalu Membuat Berkerut," *Kompas*, January 12, 1982. The title of this performance was based on Yudhistira Ardi Noegraha Moelyana Massardi's 1974 poem "Sajak Sikat Gigi" (Toothbrush Poem), published in Ajip Rosidi, *Laut Biru Langit Biru* (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1977), p. 689. See also Savitri Scherer, "Yudhistira Ardi Noegraha: Social Attitudes in the Works of a Popular Writer," *Indonesia* 31 (April 1981): 31–52. After witnessing hundreds of performers struggle to find room on stage, one music critic wrote that Roesli and his "troops" were really "over the top," and—contrary to the structure and style of Massardi's original poem—Roesli's show was "confused and

Beyond Roesli's pristine vocals and trademark comedic displays, highlights included the opening act, when actors descended from the ceiling by crawling down ropes head-first, while falling confetti littered the packed stage. In musical and theatrical terms, this was a highly unconventional avant-garde arrangement, involving dramatic masked dancers from Cirebon, flirtatious teenagers mingling onstage, long strands of percussion drums suspended vertically, and vivid scenes and sounds from a marketplace full of street beggars, haggling customers, frolicking animals, pedicabs with ringing bells, car engines that were revving, garbage spilling over, and people treading on the damp ground.⁵⁰ Roesli managed to rally support from all quarters for this non-profit performance, including from public officials, students, and financial sponsors, and created a carnival atmosphere in order to celebrate the burgeoning creative arts movement in Bandung and add further dimensions to this movement. For the performance finale, audience members joined the artists for a spirited singsong of Ismail Marzuki's 1946 classic "Halo Halo Bandung" (Hello Hello Bandung).

Feedback from his peers was important to Roesli, and invitations to his performances were always extended to the most prominent artists in Bandung, including Guruh Soekarno Putra, Jack Lesmana, Idris Sardi, and Slamet Abdul Syukur. During an interview with reporters from the music magazine *Gadis*, Roesli was quoted as follows: "I always want to receive feedback from my seniors, I long for criticism. People that are constantly drunk with flattery take the easy way out, and without any control they will collapse."⁵¹ In collaboration with the Goethe Institute of Jakarta, Nano Riantiarno's Teater Koma (Coma Theater) performed an ambitious adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* in the summer of 1983 under the title *Opera Ikan Asin* (Salted Fish Opera).⁵² Some flattery was inevitable, as Harry Roesli was

scattered"; see Herry Dim, "Pagelaran 'Sikat Gigi' Harry Roesli: Dan Ia Berpendapat Pasukan Itu Berlebihan," *Pikiran Rakyat*, January 12, 1982.

⁵⁰ In order to produce such a wide variety of experimental sounds, Roesli integrated traditional Sundanese instruments such as the *angklung* (rattling bamboo tubes), *kentongan* (massive wooden bell often struck to sound an alarm), and percussions with his electric rock instruments and improvised items such as broken cymbals, whistles, and sandpaper. Roesli also paid homage to the Sundanese *ketuk tilu*, an antedated village performance involving a small musical ensemble, usually heard during a ritual (e.g., harvest celebration, circumcision, marriage). For more on traditional Sundanese instruments and dance, see Endo Suanda, "The Social Context of Cirebonese Performing Artists," *Asian Music* 13,1 (1981): 27–41; Peter Manuel and Randall Baier, "Jaipongan: Indigenous Popular Music of West Java," *Asian Music* 18,1 (1986): 91–110; Williams, "Current Developments in Sundanese Popular Music," pp. 112–13; Weintraub, *Power Plays*, pp. 129–36; and Spiller, *Focus*, pp. 124–30.

⁵¹ Roesli was the first to acknowledge that other artists were creating similar, even superior, works at the time, and that he was particularly inspired by Slamet Abdul Syukur and Franki Raden. For many decades, Roesli was able to collaborate with the most prominent musical and theatrical groups in Indonesia, including Riantiarno's Teater Koma (famous for the *Cockroach Opera* and the banned production *Succession*), Rendra's Teater Bengkel (Workshop Theater), and Wijaya's Teater Mandiri (Independent Theater). Roesli was equally forthcoming when it came to artistic failure. Following *Ken Arok*, for instance, plans for an operatic rendering of Marah Roesli's novel *Siti Nurbaya* never came to fruition. Roesli also acknowledged his aborted attempt to provide the soundtrack for Arifin C. Noer's film *Suci Sang Primadona* (1977), and used this as an inspiration to improve. See "Harry Roesli akan Istirahat Dulu dari Segala Kegiatan Musik/Teater"; and "Menyelami Kejujuran Harry Roesli: 'Aku Nggak Pernah Bisa Bikin Lagu Manis.'"

⁵² See Peter Branscombe, "Brecht, Weill and Mahagonny," *The Musical Times* 102,1422 (1961): 483–86; "Sehari Dengan Harry Roesli," p. 22; Zurbuchen, "Images of Culture and National Development in Indonesia," p. 128; "Renungan Riantiarno dan Kepahitan Brecht," *Tempo*, April 27, 1999; Jonathan Napack,

commissioned to write the music for this record-breaking box office hit, spending countless sleepless nights translating Brecht's opera. Topical themes were introduced, and the Indonesian police in particular were lambasted for their corrupt practices.

While musical commissions and propositions continued to flood into Roesli's Bandung studio, throughout much of the 1980s Roesli channeled his formidable energies towards social work and teaching. Aat Soeratin, a well-known television actor and theater performer from Bandung, notes the severity of Roesli's decision to relegate the creative arts for the "protracted and crushing" job of helping Bandung's underprivileged youth and confronting the city's criminal elements.⁵³ Roesli at times poured all of his potential into assisting stigmatized youth, those street children considered vile, uncouth, diseased, and shabby by Bandung's middle and upper classes. To many, the studio on Jalan Supratman was a shelter, and Roesli did his best to provide the basics, usually in the form of *sesuap nasi dan ribuan* (a mouthful of rice and a few thousand rupiah).⁵⁴ A neat summary of Roesli's logic (contained in the *Titik Api* ITB concert pamphlet) reads as follows:

Many amongst those [street] children are intelligent and have high IQs. They have a strong potential to become shrewd and sly criminals. If permitted, however, these children can live side by side with the rest of us. We must help them become acquainted with structure and discipline, with etiquette, because if we only rely on the state there will be no resolution.

A recurring dilemma faced by Roesli and his wife, Kania, and their associates at DKSB was the noxious attitude of parents and criminal "bosses" who exploited street children. Many promising, talented youngsters were removed from Roesli's informal music school by parents, guardians, or gangs and sent back to the streets to make money.⁵⁵ Kania was active in relief efforts and family planning, and she helped to establish a non-profit volunteer association called Bandung Peduli (Care) in 1999 to deliver food (typically rice and salted fish) to poor rural villages and urban neighborhoods throughout West Java. She also piloted a study of Bandung's poor families, going door-to-door to gauge domestic problems and develop a set of proposals to alleviate suffering and increase morale among the victimized and the wretched. It was all very meaningful and well-intended, but, in the end, even Kania admitted that the social problems have endured, most of her proposals fell on deaf

"Reborn Indonesian Theater is Alive and Kicking," *The New York Times*, August 3, 1999; and Leon Agusta, "Playwright N. Riantiarno is a Visionary with a Mission," *Jakarta Post*, February 24, 2008.

⁵³ Aat Soeratin, a member of DKSB, wrote the introduction to the pamphlet handed out at Harry Roesli's *Titik Api* tribute concert at ITB on June 5, 2009.

⁵⁴ See Putu Fajar Arcana's introduction to Harry Roesli, *Republik Funky: Asal Usul Harry Roesli* (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2005), pp. viii–xi. The exchange rate as of February 2011 was approximately 8,900 Indonesian rupiah to one US dollar.

⁵⁵ In 2004, Roesli put the number of homeless children in Bandung at an alarming 36,000, and warned that the city ran the risk of "losing a whole generation." See "Children's Rights Campaign Launched," *Jakarta Post*, August 23, 2000; "Is Indonesia Still Relevant, 55 Years On," *Jakarta Post*, May 20, 2001; and Rinny Srihartini, "Harry Roesli Dimata Anak Buahnya," *Tempo*, December 11, 2004.

ears, and even those families that were willing to reform often relapsed into their destructive lifestyles soon after Peduli volunteers left.⁵⁶

Era of State Censorship

Indonesia's New Order era (1966–98) was known for developmental authoritarianism, national imperatives (unity, stability), and the stifling of dissent. An extensive bureaucratic apparatus limited Indonesian artistic creativity while attempting to maintain order through social engineering and cultural production.⁵⁷ Domesticating the arts was the job of the censorial apparatus, and regulation was fueled by coercion as well as patronage. There was also a legal and regulatory framework for censorship inherited from the Dutch colonial system. The Indonesian Department of Information was authorized to oversee permissions and protect the values of the state and the governing regime with respect to everything related to radio and television broadcasts, cinema, publishing houses and media centers, and the performing arts. Targeting anti-government sentiment as well as immorality, the censorial apparatus was decentralized, with local bureaucrats responsible for issuing performance permits for theater and musical performances, while the local police were in charge of enforcing the terms of the permits.⁵⁸

Harry Roesli certainly had nationalistic tendencies, often expressing a love of Indonesia, although this grated against New Order cultural conservatism, which fostered deference to authority and passivity, and sought to co-opt the arts by patronizing them. To love Indonesia was to become a participant in its future, which allowed people to ridicule the state and satirize politicians, along with their roles in perpetuating crime, corruption and poverty, youth illiteracy and drug abuse, and the vanity of celebrity. For artists such as Harry Roesli, Rhoma Irama, and Iwan Fals, therefore, contrarian and experimental performances came to signify opposition to dominant state discourses of order and stability, as well as hegemonic rules for social

⁵⁶ Personal communication with Kania Handiman Roesli, September 2009. See also Vanessa Johanson, "Help That Helps: Millions Are on Welfare. But Can it Make a Difference?" *Inside Indonesia* 57 (January–March 1999): 16–17.

⁵⁷ Some of the high profile arrests included author Pramoedya Ananta Toer and playwright W. S. Rendra. See, for instance, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, "The Theft of Rights," *The New York Times*, December 7, 1992; John Pemberton, *On the Subject of "Java"* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); George, "Some Things that have Happened to the Sun after September 1965," p. 606; Razif Bahari, "Remembering History, W/Righting History: Piecing the Past in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Buru Tetralogy," *Indonesia* 75 (April 2003): 61–90; and R. Anderson Sutton, "'Reform Arts'? Performance Live and Mediated in Post-Soeharto Indonesia," *Ethnomusicology* 48,2 (2004): 203–28.

⁵⁸ There were also efforts to make local artists into *juru penerangan* (information officers) able to monitor and report on local events. In the context of the *era reformasi* (reform era prompted by the fall of Suharto in May 1998), however, this censorial apparatus has for the most part been dismantled. For more, see James R. Brandon, *Theatre in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); David T. Hill, *The Press in New Order Indonesia* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1995); Philip Kitley, "After the Bans: Modelling Indonesian Communications for the Future," in *Indonesia Today: Challenges of History*, ed. Grayson J. Lloyd and Shannon L. Smith (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 256–69; and Barbara Hatley, "Indonesian Theatre Ten Years after *Reformasi*," *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities* 1 (2008): 53–72.

behavior, taste, and judgment.⁵⁹ Through his musical drama, parody, and lyrical satire, Roesli, in particular, targeted Indonesian presidents (from Suharto, the “father of development,” to current president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, as well as the three presidents in-between), the national ideology *Pancasila*, patriotic songs and slogans, responses to terrorism, police repression, attacks on free speech, the lifting of “pro-poor” state subsidies, flagrant and persistent corruption, and moral decay.⁶⁰

As mentioned, during the New Order era the government established the “dominant institutional context” for the arts and strove to guide the development of cultural life, maintaining the government’s position as the main patron of the arts.⁶¹ Within this institutional context, control and censorship of musical and artistic education was an essential component of the hegemonic “way of living” envisioned by authorities in Indonesia.⁶² Roesli traced the “narrowing of public tastes” to the national education system, which he deemed heavily bureaucratic and deficient in its musical instruction.⁶³ Public schools’ limited budgets also ensured that there were too few musical instruments available for teachers and students. In 1981, Roesli was able to penetrate this hegemonic system by helping to establish the Jurusan Musik dan Sendratasik (Department of Art, Drama, Dance, and Music) at Bandung’s Institut Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan (Teachers Training Institute).⁶⁴

By 1983, Roesli was responsible for some eighty students at the Department of Art, Drama, Dance, and Music, working as a part-time instructor in musical composition and *solfeggio* (Italian: a voice exercise involving singing scales and listening practice), as

⁵⁹ It must be said that even the most courageous artists constantly exercised a form of self-censorship and resorted to veiled expressions, metaphoric language, and multilayered or embedded messages. See, for instance, Brita Miklouho-Maklai, *Exposing Society’s Wounds: Some Aspects of Contemporary Indonesian Art since 1966*, Asian Studies Monograph Series No 5 (Adelaide: Flinders University, 1991); Philip Kitley, “Pancasila in the Minor Key: TVRI’s ‘Si Unyil’ Models the Child,” *Indonesia* 68 (October 1999): 129–52; Wallach, *Modern Noise, Fluid Genres*, p. 16; and Ubonrat Siriyuvusak, “People’s Media and Communication Rights in Indonesia and the Philippines,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 6,2 (2005): 245–63.

⁶⁰ *Pancasila* is based broadly on five pillars: belief in one God, humanitarianism, nationalism, democracy, and social justice. For critical readings of *Pancasila*, see, among others, Douglas E. Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance* (London: Routledge, 1995); and Katharine E. McGregor, “Commemoration of 1 October, ‘Hari Kesaktian Pancasila’: A Post Mortem Analysis?” *Asian Studies Review* 26,1 (2002): 39–72.

⁶¹ George, “Some Things that have Happened to the Sun after September 1965,” p. 605. Some have gone even further, suggesting that the New Order administrative apparatus “castrated a generation of [Indonesian] writers.” See Hendrik M. J. Maier, “Flying a Kite: the Crimes of Pramoedya Ananta Toer,” in *Figures of Criminality in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Colonial Vietnam*, ed. Vincente L. Rafael (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1999), p. 258. Even some traditional *wayang* puppeteers faced persecution for their all-night performances, accused of interweaving communist messages throughout their narratives. See Sutton, “‘Reform Arts?’” p. 204. See also Andrew N. Weintraub, “Contest-ing Culture: Sundanese Wayang Golek Purwa Competitions in New Order Indonesia,” *Asian Theatre Journal* 18,1 (2001): 87–104.

⁶² Michael H. Bodden, “Teater Koma’s *Sukses* and Indonesia’s New Order,” *Asian Theatre Journal* 14,2 (1997): 259–80.

⁶³ Cohen, “Eat Heavy, Dress Cool, Make Lots of Music,” p. 11.

⁶⁴ The Teachers Training Institute was renamed Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (Education University of Indonesia) in 1999. During an interview with the *Jakarta Post* in 1995, Roesli stated (tongue-in-cheek) that, while officials may have wanted to relieve him from his post with the Teachers Training Institute, the bureaucracy had deteriorated to such an extent that the proper procedures for firing a civil servant would take anywhere from five to ten years, so there was nothing to worry about. Simbolon, “Harry Composes a Melody with Audience,” p. 8.

well as teaching guitar, general music knowledge and analysis, and music harmony.⁶⁵ Besides assuming new responsibilities as a university lecturer, Roesli's writings started to be published widely in Indonesia, beginning with his music reviews and followed by weekly editorials for national newspapers (particularly *Kompas*).⁶⁶ Looking at samples of his early music reviews, one finds that Roesli skillfully dissected Uly Sgar's 1987 cassette *Senandung Kabut Biru* (Humming Blue Mist) and Krakatau's 1987 album release *Flash Art*.⁶⁷ Roesli's method was to scrutinize in fine detail the musical compositions and lyrics in accordance with his high expectations and views on the aesthetics of art and the creative process. For instance, in one of his reviews, Roesli asked: does a new album enrich the Indonesian music treasury, or does it contribute to an increasingly monolithic atmosphere? When evaluating compositions, Roesli tended to examine and emphasize the combination of rhythm and melody, the intensity of ballads and the poetic relevance of lyrics, and the balance between commercial or industry imperatives and artistic integrity. According to Roesli, over-elaborate attempts to appeal (commercially) to a broad audience dilute not only the aesthetics and quality of music, but also the "meaning" intended by the artist in question. Roesli made notes on the progressions made in each song, the movement of sound and the instrumental arrangements, and the "intuition" of the artist as well as his or her technical proficiency. Specific moments were seized upon by Roesli, for instance, an "excellent" opening arrangement, a "defective" instrumental accompaniment, a "thin" melody, "pretentious" vocals, or the "blessing" of flawless harmonies. Really flat, bland, and artificial lyrics were likened to a takeaway *cap cay* (common Chinese vegetable dish) served on top of a pile of rubbish. Decisions by producers to relegate some of the best tracks to Side B of a cassette because of commercial concerns led Roesli to call the whole music business a *kerupuk* (a cheap, shrimp-flavored chip) junk-food industry.

In 1989, a new arrangement entitled *Off the Record* was performed by Roesli at Gedung Kesenian Jakarta from August 17–19, followed three years later by *Off the*

⁶⁵ "Sehari Dengan Harry Roesli," pp. 23–24. Additional teaching duties included lecturing at the Department of Arts and Music at Pasundan University in Bandung from 1988 and establishing a private music education institute called Rumah Musik Harry Roesli (Harry Roesli's House of Music) at his studio in Bandung in 1996. Harry Roesli's House of Music provided a vital source of income to keep the Bandung studio open and support DKSB projects. Youngsters from wealthy families enrolled in this institute as a preparatory measure to help ensure their success while studying music theory and application abroad. Roesli also wrote musical jingles for television commercials as a supplementary source of income, as well as serving on the editorial board of a fashion magazine, *Mode*, and running a cleaning service.

⁶⁶ A collection of sixty Sunday edition *Kompas* editorials written by Roesli between December 17, 2000, and October 31, 2004, are contained in Roesli, *Republik Funky*. Prior to this, Roesli wrote a weekly column called *Interupsi!* (Interruption!) for *Kompas*.

⁶⁷ Harry Roesli, "Catatan Musik Harry Roesli: 'Senandung Kabut Biru' Uly Sgar," *Prioritas*, February 1, 1987; and Harry Roesli, "Catatan Musik Harry Roesli: 'Flash Art' dari Krakatau," *Prioritas*, February 8, 1987. Throughout the 1980s, Krakatau successfully fused light jazz with Indonesian pop, with album sales in the millions. This commercial success came at the expense of their musical roots and had critics such as Roesli calling for a return to authentic music and quality composition rather than cheap imitations. In the 1990s, Krakatau's founding members, perhaps heeding such calls, began reformulating their music by incorporating elements of traditional Sundanese music, and in the process suffered a decline in album sales of some 90 percent. See, for instance, Christopher J. Miller, *In the Face of Industri: Alternative Populisms in Indonesian Musik Kontemporer*, academic paper, Society for Ethnomusicology, Columbus, Ohio, October 25, 2007.

Record II, held at Bandung's Arts and Dance Academy of Indonesia, from July 23–25.⁶⁸ These performances (each running approximately 150 minutes) were much more subtle than past compositions, with a focus on tonal and instrumental precision, and the use of new multimedia technologies such as the Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) and computer processors to enhance audience members' experience.⁶⁹ The messages being conveyed were fundamental, ranging from land conflicts to the absurdities of metropolitan traffic to the censorship of media and arts. Government officials were mocked as *Si Bengal* (Roesli, the mischievous one) stopped the show midway through to mimic a phone call from the authorities, using his shoe as a phone receiver. The public was not spared, either, as Roesli ridiculed people for their inability to form orderly queues and their general lack of discipline and control. Such comic relief complemented the serious content of Roesli's live shows, thus avoiding drudgery and boredom. Viewers were treated to an exceptional artistic performance peppered with the usual dark humor and satire for which Roesli had become notorious.

After having benefited from years of economic growth and development, Suharto's credibility and authority began to decline in the late 1980s, as new demands for enhanced political rights and freedoms surfaced. Musical innovation and fusion provided an aesthetic dimension to burgeoning political movements across Indonesia. It is held that musicians have a "truth-bearing function" insofar as the music they produce can be interpreted, represented, articulated, and deployed within a social context, shaping public feelings in order to "animate political action."⁷⁰ For Roesli, jazz was an ideal musical medium to promote the message of political reform and mobilize support for this multidimensional cause.

Jazz and Keterbukaan

Despite flirtations with *keterbukaan* (political and social "openness") in the early 1990s, the Suharto regime frequently resorted to reactionary censorship. There was, for instance, the suspension of all official government aid from the Netherlands in 1992 and the closing of *Tempo* media group, *Editor*, and *DeTIK* in 1994.⁷¹ During this volatile

⁶⁸ See "'Off the Record' Harry Roesli: Musik Saya Musik Indonesia," *Kompas*, August 13, 1989; "Pergelaran 'Off the Record' Harry Roesli: Pendulang Seni Modern yang Merakyat," *Kompas*, August 20, 1989; "Setelah Delapan Tahun Ngumpet," *Tempo*, August 26, 1989, p. 69; "'Off the Record' Harry Roesli," *Pikiran Rakyat*, July 25, 1992, p. 5; and "'Off the Record' Harry Roesli: Masih Ada Orang Urakan," *Kompas*, July 1992. There was a third installment of *Off the Record*, however, I have not found any music reviews or Indonesian language sources describing this performance.

⁶⁹ The emergence of MIDI began in the 1980s as the number of interfaces for musical expression increased dramatically. See, for instance, Eduardo Reck Miranda and Marcelo M. Wanderley, *New Digital Musical Instruments: Control and Interaction beyond the Keyboard* (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2006).

⁷⁰ See Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and John Street, "The Politics of Popular Culture," in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology*, ed. Kate Nash and Alan Scott (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 302–11.

⁷¹ The *Tempo* closure announced by Harmoko, the minister of information, on June 21, 1994, was such a contradictory act that Duncan McCargo concluded that it "was the beginning of the end for the Suharto government"; see Duncan McCargo, *Media and Politics in Pacific Asia* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 82. For more on this controversial period, see also Hill, *The Press in New Order Indonesia*, p. 41; Jacques Bertrand, "False Starts, Succession Crises, and Regime Transition: Flirting with Openness in Indonesia," *Pacific Affairs* 69,3 (1996): 319–40; and Fred Bunnell, "Community Participation, Indigenous Ideology,

period, an editorial written by Harry Roesli for the West Java newspaper *Pikiran Rakyat* (The People's View) compared the principles of political openness to those of jazz music.⁷² Suharto may have been pressured into granting various concessions and loosening the state's grip on several aspects of society, although it was ultimately the responsibility of the *rakyat* (people) to shed their complacency and show greater capacity for innovation and expression. Jazz, Roesli argued, is an act of autonomous expression, an art form based on creativity, aesthetics, and purity of motive. According to Roesli's analysis, Indonesians suffered from a deficit of creative expression and autonomous thought because of centuries of colonial and authoritarian rule, as well as general malaise. In the name of national development (the cornerstone of the New Order era and Suharto's main claim to legitimacy), the coconut trees gently swaying in the breeze were replaced with hotel walls on the beachfront (another allusion to Marzuki's *Rayuan Pulau Kelapa*), and education became synonymous with indoctrination. Individuality was therefore stifled, dissent led to blacklisting, and the arts were not given their proper place in society.

Roesli found commonalities in jazz, social improvisation, and entrepreneurial initiative.⁷³ Each enables individual expression, unleashing the caged talents of a blooming society. This prospect was within reach in Indonesia, although to Roesli's dismay, young artists were still being held back by technical obstacles, official restraints, stagnation, and monolithic public tastes (commercialism). Roesli proposed that if two of the master jazz musicians known for fusion and experimentation, Miles Davis and Herbie Hancock, were reborn as unknown Javanese musicians named Ponijo and Sutiman, they would have been scolded by their elders rather than celebrated for attempting such innovations. Therefore, genuine openness based on freedom and democracy would require that music is open to everyone, with artists understanding the link between rights and responsibilities and being allowed to blossom without hindrance from the industry or the vocational establishment.⁷⁴

Activist Politics: Indonesian NGOs in the 1990s," in *Making Indonesia*, ed. Daniel Lev and Ruth McVey (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 180–201.

⁷² Harry Roesli, "Jazz dan Keterbukaan," *Pikiran Rakyat*, November 17, 1991.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Jazz was, indeed, becoming a focus for Roesli, who first participated in the *A Mild Jakarta Jazz Festival* in 1988. Roesli went on to perform *Paranthese* (Parentheses) again in 1993 and 1995, making headlines for outrageous percussion ensembles and theatrics resembling (loosely) the hit UK musical *Stomp* (created in Brighton in 1991 by Luke Cresswell and Steve McNicholas). See, for instance, Noe Firman, "AMJJ '93 Sepi, 'Four of a Kind' Mempesona," *Pikiran Rakyat*, August 25, 1993; and "Jak-Jazz 93: Kebebasan dan Porak Porandanya Batasan," *Kompas*, August 26, 1993. In 1989, Harry Roesli wrote the introduction to jazz maestro Bubi Chen's cassette *Kedamaian* (Peace of Mind), celebrating the album as a masterpiece because of the fusion of jazz piano with traditional Sundanese zithers and flutes. That same year, Roesli also composed the soundtrack for Putu Wijaya's feature film *Cas Cis Cus*. See Cohen, "Eat Heavy, Dress Cool, Make Lots of Music," p. 11; and Barendregt and van Zanten, "Popular Music in Indonesia since 1998, in Particular Fusion, Indie, and Islamic Music on Video Compact Disks and the Internet," p. 74. Roesli's political advocacy was based on an inclusive principle that extended beyond jazz to incorporate other youth movements, including rap, that were being attacked by politicians, such as former president B. J. Habibie (who was also Roesli's cousin). See, for instance, Heri Diana, "Diana Krall in Concert: Rich in Music and Performance," *The Jakarta Post*, August 4, 2002; and Michael Bodden, "Rap in Indonesian Youth Music of the 1990s: 'Globalization,' 'Outlaw Genres,' and Social Protest," *Asian Music* 36,2 (2005): 1–26.

In the spirit of openness, Roesli participated in a campaign against the transfer of nuclear technologies to Indonesia, noting grimly that the state had yet to prove capable of managing public toilets or mass transportation systems properly.⁷⁵ It was, therefore, an absurdity to suggest that Indonesia should develop clusters of nuclear power plants across Java, according to Roesli. While many couched the nuclear debate in terms of national pride, Roesli maintained his pragmatic opposition to its adoption and development. In June 1994, Roesli was asked to represent Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (Friends of the Earth Indonesia) in Japan by performing at anti-nuclear protests and music festivals sponsored by Japanese groups such as the Muria Forum and the No Nukes Asia Forum.⁷⁶

In the volatile political context of 1994, Harry Roesli's *Overdosis* (Overdose) performances generated significant media coverage.⁷⁷ Offering dark portraits of contemporary social life in Indonesia, *Overdosis* expressed anger and frustration, targeting persistent social ills (particularly those found in Bandung). Performances were held at Bandung's Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia (Arts and Dance Academy of Indonesia) from April 30 to May 1, 1994. The following year, Harry Roesli's immense multimedia musical adaptation *Opera Tusuk Gigi* (Toothpick Opera), involving a supporting cast of 182 female artists, was performed at Gelora Saperua, in Bandung, from September 22–23, 1995.⁷⁸ This was an experimental artistic adaptation of Soni Farid Maulana's 1987 poem "Tusuk Gigi."⁷⁹

August 1995 marked the golden anniversary of Indonesia's independence, yet Roesli avoided the fanfare, parades, and festivals by appearing instead at the Classic Rock Pub in Blok-M, South Jakarta.⁸⁰ Roesli instructed the rambunctious audience members to shout out any thoughts they had on the state of Indonesia, and Roesli

⁷⁵ "Indonesia's Top Musician Joins Anti-Nuclear Campaign in Japan," *The Jakarta Post*, June 4, 1994; and "Harry Roesli: Iwan Fals ada Lucu Michael Jackson Lain," *HumOr* 95 (September 1994): 20–26. This comment about the inability to manage public toilets has also been attributed to Sudjiwo Tejo, although it seems that the analogy was quite common during the nuclear debate. See Sulfikar Amir, "The State and the Reactor: Nuclear Politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia," *Indonesia* 89 (April 2010): 101–49.

⁷⁶ There was coverage of Roesli's trip in the Japanese press, for instance, in *Mainichi* (June 11, 1994), however, I do not have the full sources for or titles of the articles. In the early 1990s, nuclear feasibility studies were completed by New Japan Engineering Consultants, Inc. (NEWJEC), a subsidiary of Kansai Electric Power. For more information, visit the Global Collaborative website, available at: www.globalcollab.org/Nautilus/australia/reframing/aust-ind-nuclear/ind-np/muria/feasibility-studies (accessed on November 10, 2009). For an argument in favor of energy diversification (including nuclear), see I. Subki, "Indonesian Requirements for Future Nuclear Power Plants," *Progress in Nuclear Energy* 29,1 (1995): 107–14.

⁷⁷ Harry Roesli, performing *Overdosis* with DKSB, sought to capture the public mood and provide an outlet for the frustrations that artists were experiencing. For reviews and reactions to these performances, see the following: "Yuni Shara & Atiek CB Dalam Musik Over Dosis," *Pikiran Rakyat*, April 24, 1994; "Harry Roesli 'Over Dosis,'" *Kompas*, April 30, 1994; "'Over Dosis' Ungkap Masalah Aktual," *Pikiran Rakyat*, May 1, 1994; "Harry Roesli 'Over Dosis': Saya Tahu Kalian Hidup Tertekan," *Kompas*, May 4, 1994; "Potret Buram Dalam Pentas 'Over Dosis' Harry Roesli," *Suara Karya*, May 8, 1994; "Dunia Dengan Sejumlah Keliru Takar," *DeTIK* 61 (May 11–17, 1994); and "Over Dosis Harry Roesli: Harus Manusiawi Pada Remaja," *Karina* 5 (June 1994).

⁷⁸ "Karya Harry Roesli Terbaru: Musik Multi Media 'Tusuk Gigi,'" *Pikiran Rakyat*, June 5, 1992.

⁷⁹ Soni Farid Maulana is a prolific poet and journalist from Tasikmalaya, West Java. The poem "Tusuk Gigi" can be found in Soni Farid Maulana, *Kita Lahir Sebagai Dongengan: Sajak-Sajak Pilihan* (Magelang: Indonesia Tera, 2000), p. 9.

⁸⁰ Simbolon, "Harry Composes a Melody with Audience," p. 8.

created an impromptu, live act based on the comments he heard. After much hilarity and nonsense, Roesli silenced the crowd by singing the solemn, patriotic melodies of “Satu Nusa, Satu Bangsa” (One Homeland, One Nation), written by L. Manik in 1947. The reverie did not last long, however, as Roesli altered the lyrics to the song, thereby exciting the increasingly intoxicated audience members.

Modified Lyrics to “Satu Nusa, Satu Bangsa” (revised in 1999)⁸¹

<i>Satu nusa, satu bangsa(t)</i>	One nation, one thief
<i>Satu bahaya kita</i>	One of our dangers
<i>Tanah air banyak partai</i>	A homeland with many parties
<i>Untuk diceraai berai</i>	To be divided
<i>Indonesia puasa</i>	Indonesia fasting
<i>Indonesia tersiksa</i>	Indonesia suffering
<i>Nusa bangsa, punya siapa?</i>	A homeland and nation, who are the owners?
<i>Punya partai, yang banyak dana</i>	The owners are the parties, with lots of funds
-- --	-- --
<i>Empat lima proklamasi</i>	Proclamation of '45 [by first president Sukarno]
<i>Enam tujuh bubar PKI</i>	Indonesian Communist Party eliminated in '67
<i>Delapan trilyun JPS</i>	Eleven trillion rupiah for the social safety net
<i>Katanya salah sasaran</i>	They say it's the wrong target
<i>Sembilan-sembilan</i>	'99 [elections]
<i>Kampanye rusuh</i>	Riotous campaign
<i>Sepuluh, Negara runtuh</i>	10, the country collapsed

In private, Roesli expressed considerable anxiety about prevailing social conditions in Indonesia. He bemoaned the widening gap between the affluent and the desperate, the public's general malaise and complacency, the government's repressive policies, and so forth. There were also persistent signs that Roesli's Bandung studio on Jalan Supratman was under surveillance, and the prospect that he could be arrested, again, for subversion (meaning anything the authorities deemed anti-government, impolite, or immoral) was constantly looming.⁸²

⁸¹ In the context of the 1999 general elections in Indonesia, contested by forty-eight political parties of all stripes, Roesli revised his edition of “Satu Nusa, Satu Bangsa.” Roesli also questioned the legitimacy of Indonesia's long-standing slogan *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), using wordplay to poke holes in this concept. Was it not, asked Roesli, more like *Bhinneka tidak Ika, atau Bhinneka susah Ika, atau juga Bhinneka lawan Ika* (Unity not Diversity, or Unity stifles Diversity, or Unity opposed to Diversity)? See Harry Roesli, “Kaus Partai dan Baju Besi,” *Kompas*, May 15, 1999. Roesli ended the song with this disclaimer: “apologies to the original songwriter, but whether we like it or not, this is the way it is being performed on the streets and sung by the youth.” Roesli also reported having heard many satirical renderings of classic Indonesian songs on public buses and at train stations. Other patriotic classics, such as Ismail Marzuki's “Indonesia Pusaka” (Indonesia Our Inheritance) were modified by Roesli (see the main text for those lyrics).

⁸² Surveillance was ongoing, although it is likely that the authorities were restrained by the fact that Roesli might die while in custody, owing to his long record of ill health (diabetes, hypertension).

Modified Lyrics to “Indonesia Pusaka” (Indonesia Our Inheritance)⁸³

<i>Indonesia tanah air siapa?</i>	Indonesia whose homeland?
<i>Katanya tanah air beta</i>	They call it our homeland
<i>Indonesia sejak enam lima</i>	Indonesia since '65 [rise of Suharto]
<i>Katanya adil sejahtera</i>	They call it equal and prosperous
<i>Nyatanya hatiku berkata</i>	The reality, my heart tells me
<i>Petani dirampas tanahnya</i>	Farmers' lands are seized
<i>Buruh-buruh miskin tak terkira</i>	There are so many poor laborers
<i>Sampai akhir menutup mata ...</i>	Right to the end their eyes are closed ...

Musical Expression and Morality

With the onset of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, Roesli's message, expressed as always through his music and avant-garde compositions, became fixated on the crisis of social morality and the destitution of the urban poor rather than the macroeconomics of capital flight and monetary policy.⁸⁴ Roesli invited a fair bit of controversy with the 1997 release of the cassette *Si Cantik* (The Beautiful One). This cassette was full of lyrics deploring corruption and moral decay, with one satirical song titled “Si Gitar Satu Senar” (The Guitar with One String) that criticized the government's *asas tunggal* policy that enforced *Pancasila* as the “sole foundation” of the nation.⁸⁵ Musical harmonies are not possible when a guitar is missing four strings, just as social harmony requires an appreciation of diverse interests and polyglot civil associations. In July 1997, Roesli directed a live television concert on Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia (Educational Television Indonesia); it was a show that featured an ensemble consisting entirely of children.⁸⁶ Also in July, Roesli performed a new arrangement called *Musik Jantung* (Heartbeat Music) at the Jakarta Percussion Festival, held at Pekan Raya Jakarta, from July 8–9. *Jantung* was inspired by Roesli's prolonged cardiovascular illness. Using an electrocardiogram monitor to show the heartbeats of a young associate on stage, Roesli managed to transform the machine's pulse graphics into musical tones through a MIDI computerized device.⁸⁷

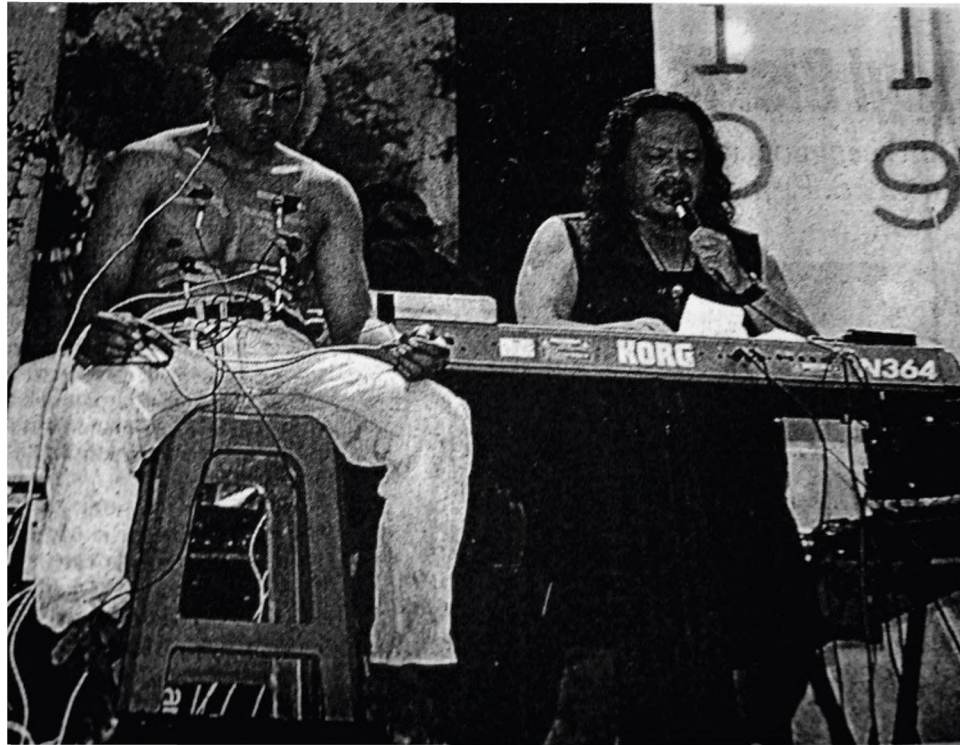
⁸³ As found in Bambang Subroto, Sr., *Professionally Directing People* (Jakarta: Elex Media Komputindo, 2005), p. 41.

⁸⁴ Currency devaluation, beginning with the devaluation of the Thai baht in July 1997, caused financial shockwaves throughout Southeast Asia. For a more detailed analysis, see Vedi R. Hadiz and Richard Robison, “Neo-Liberal Reforms and Illiberal Consolidations: The Indonesian Paradox,” *The Journal of Development Studies* 41,2 (2005): 220–41.

⁸⁵ The title track, “Si Cantik,” was also thought to refer to one of Suharto's granddaughters, who was suspected of selling the drug Ecstasy. See Wallach, *Modern Noise, Fluid Genres*, p. 88; and Kees van Dijk, “The Magnetism of Songs,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 159,1 (2003): 31–64. See also Heru Hendratmoko, “Harry Rusli: Albumnya Disensor Produser, Harry Mengaku Kini Lebih Bersikap Akomodatif,” *Jakarta Jakarta* 569 (May 31–June 6, 1997): 22–23; Akmal Nasery Basral, “Balada Si Gendut Harry,” *Gatra*, July 26, 1997, p. 106; Bambang Iss, “Bukan Memburu Rekor,” *Minggu Ini* 8 (May 20–27, 1998): 15; and Noorhaidi Hasan, “Reformasi, Religious Diversity, and Islamic Radicalism after Suharto,” *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities* 1 (2008): 23–51.

⁸⁶ Rasmi Retnaningtyas, “Harry Roesli: Saya Tertipu Gerakan Moral,” *Sosok* 16 (August 9, 1997): 26–28.

⁸⁷ See Dwiki Dharmawan, “Denyut Goyang Perkusi,” *Gatra*, July 19, 1997, p. 104; and Helly Minarti, “Musician Harry Roesli Still up to His ‘Naughty’ Ways,” *Jakarta Post*, August 10, 1997, p. 13.



Harry Roesli and an assistant (on the left) use an electrocardiogram monitor in July 1997 to create an innovative range of musical tones⁸⁸

As a welcome reprieve from this era of crisis and ill health, a festive reunion concert for Roesli's original band, Harry Roesli and His Gang, was held on October 31, 1997, at Jakarta's Poster Café and again at Bumi Sangkuriang, in Bandung, on November 22. The reviewers and music critics in attendance hailed these shows as great successes, as they combined complex musical arrangements with comedic relief and shrewd political insights.⁸⁹ This reprieve was cut short, however, as metropolitan Indonesia was soon in the grips of riots and widespread violence targeting (for the

⁸⁸ Photo taken by Moriza Prananda of *Gatra*, July 19, 1997.

⁸⁹ Members of "His Gang" who participated in the reunion concert (sponsored by Radio M97FM and Telkomsel) included Harry Roesli, Albert Warnerin, Triawan Munaf, Harry Pochang, Iman K., and Haviel Perdana Handiman. For reactions and reviews, see "Konser Harry Roesli and His Gang: Dua Wilayah Musik Harry Roesli," *Kompas*, November 2, 1997; "Konser Reuni Harry Roesli Sukses," *Pikiran Rakyat*, November 2, 1997; "Reuni Harry Roesli and His Gang [sic]: Musik Ziarah Si Ontohod," *Republika*, November 2, 1997; Franki Raden, "Jangan Menangis Indonesia," *Gatra*, November 8, 1997; Remi Sylado, "Harry Roesli Si Biang'Ulik," *FORUM Keadilan* 16 (November 1997): 110; Edi Purnawadi, "Geliat dari Album Lama," *UMMAT* 18 (November 1997): 87; and "Jika Batin 'Si Bengal' Tersentuh," *Lampung Post*, November 30, 1997. Roesli's brother-in-law, Haviel Perdana Handiman, first trained with Roesli in 1975, and went on to compose music for countless dramas, theatrical plays, and feature films in Indonesia, as well as teaming up with Anna Ingelby, a *wayang* puppeteer from Yorkshire, northern England, to form Indigo Moon. For more, see Matthew Isaac Cohen, "Contemporary *Wayang* in Global Contexts," *Asian Theatre Journal* 24,2 (2007): 338–69.

most part) Indonesians with Chinese ancestry. The worst violence occurred in Glodok, North Jakarta.⁹⁰ One month before the fall of Suharto, from April 17–18, 1998, Harry Roesli and DKSB performed a twenty-five-hour, non-stop concert as part of a series of political demonstrations held at Teater Utan Kayu, in Jakarta.⁹¹ This event was followed by a lament for the Trisakti Campus shootings that claimed the lives of four students in Jakarta on May 12, 1998. Nine days later, Suharto shocked the world by announcing his resignation.⁹²

Harry Roesli's early journalistic forays, the numerous music reviews he wrote, and his editorial experience with the popular magazine *Mode* (Fashion) led him to a respectable position as a *Kompas* columnist beginning in 1999. Roesli's unorthodox *Interupsi!* (Interruption!) editorials in 1999 concerned presidential politics, constitutional affairs, student movements, and national anthems, and provided social commentary on a range of other pressing issues. Similarly, his *Asal Usul* (Origins) editorials from 2000 onwards delved into the mire of elite politics; bemoaned the lifting of state subsidies on fuel and staple goods; parodied the Suharto family; grappled with terrorism, family planning, and AIDS; and addressed the gamut of contemporary political issues in humorous and often eccentric ways.⁹³

Even after the democratic political transition known as *reformasi*, authorities censored singers who changed the words to nationalist songs. Harry Roesli was among the first to be censored for his satirical rendering of Sudharnoto's 1956 composition "Garuda Pancasila" during an Independence Day celebration at the residence of the former president Abdurrahman Wahid on August 17, 2001.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ See, among others, James T. Siegel, "Early Thoughts on the Violence of May 13 and 14, 1998 in Jakarta," *Indonesia* 66 (October 1998): 75–108; and Jemma Purdey, *Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia, 1996–1999* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2006).

⁹¹ See "Musik Tanpa Tidur Harry Roesli," *Republika*, April 20, 1998. Teater Utan Kayu was established by Goenawan Mohamad following the banning and closure of *Tempo* in 1994. It has since been a popular meeting place for journalists, scholars, and artists.

⁹² In late May 1998, thousands of jubilant citizens gathered in front of Bandung's Gedung Sate, the provincial governor's complex, to celebrate the beginning of the reform era. Zaky Yamani, a journalist from *Pikiran Rakyat*, witnessed the events and recalls that Harry Roesli stood in front of the rallying crowds to lead them in a mock prayer: *Ya Tuhan, berilah kami harta tapi jangan lagi kami diberi Harto!* (Oh Lord, give us great wealth but do not give us another Suharto!) Personal communication, November 2009.

⁹³ Roesli's principled opposition to the lifting of state subsidies for Bahan Bakar Minyak (fuel) was based on an unwavering, lifelong commitment to the interests of the poor. See Harry Roesli, "Harga BBM Turun (1)," *Kompas*, May 20, 2001, p. 4; Harry Roesli, "Harga BBM Turun (2)," *Kompas*, January 20, 2002, p. 4; and Harry Roesli, "BBM BUMN!" *Kompas*, January 5, 2003, p. 4. On this divisive issue, many observers disagree with Roesli's position, citing evidence of the corruption, economic distortions, and abuse that state subsidies such as BBM engender. See, for instance, Haryo Aswicahyono and Hal Hill, "Survey of Recent Developments," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 40,3 (2004): 277–305; and Adam Tyson, "Eliminating Indonesia's Fuel Subsidy," *Jurnal Administrasi Publik* 1,3 (2005): 145–61.

⁹⁴ Another state symbol, the *Garuda*, is a mythical bird. Citing Article 154 of the Criminal Code, overzealous police officials deemed Roesli's performance to be an insult to the symbols of the state and an expression of "hatred and hostility." Roesli's lawyer, Hendardi, was joined by many from the legal community in voicing their outrage that the police were spending valuable time pursuing Roesli while a backlog of serious cases involving corruption and murder were being ignored. Article 154 was also considered a relic from the repressive New Order era. See Van Dijk, "The Magnetism of Songs," pp. 62–64; Deddy Sinaga, "Bangkitnya Penegakan Hukum Secara Represif," *Tempo*, August 23, 2001; "Song Lyrics Land Musician in Hot Water," *The Jakarta Post*, August 23, 2001; "Harry Seeks Delay of Questioning," *The Jakarta Post*, August 25, 2001; "Harry Roesli Dipatuk Garuda," *Tempo*, August 27, 2001; and Prie, *Nama Tuhan di Sebuah Kuis*, p. 203. Free speech was a contentious issue during the early years of *reformasi*. In

Modified Lyrics to “Garuda Pancasila”⁹⁵

<i>Garuda Pancasila</i>	Garuda Pancasila
<i>Aku lelah mendukungmu</i>	I am tired of supporting you
<i>Patriot sudah habis</i>	There are no patriots anymore
<i>Sejak proklamasi</i>	Since the proclamation [of independence]
<i>Selalu berkorban untukmu</i>	We always sacrifice for you
<i>Pancasila dasarnya apa</i>	Pancasila, what does it mean?
<i>Rakyat adil makmurnya kapan</i>	When will the people experience justice and prosperity?
<i>Pribadi bangsaku</i>	The character of my people
<i>Tidak maju maju ... [x3]</i>	Does not progress ... [x3]

Roesli apologized publicly afterward for altering the lyrics (an apology that was published in *Kompas*), and pragmatically noted that being accommodating after the fact was not the same as compromising the autonomy of his music or creative expression. Roesli continued to instigate trouble by organizing a fifty-hour free concert—with “terrorism” as its theme—at the Rumah Nusantara (Archipelago House) café and gallery, in north Bandung, from October 12–14, 2001.⁹⁶ Roesli opposed the United States’ invasion of Afghanistan and advocated for an enlightened approach to terror, a shift in the general mentality that stigmatized Muslim activists as “terrorists,” and a turning away from fear, equivocation, and violence. Hundreds of street children were invited to perform alongside the DKSB band, and guest appearances were made by director Putu Wijaya, actress Ratna Sarumpaet, and popular musician Doel Sumbang.

To escape the negative political atmosphere in metropolitan Jakarta and Bandung, Roesli went on a nationwide tour, called “Ziarah Seni” (Pilgrimage of Art), with DKSB in 2003, accompanied by many of Bandung’s street musicians.⁹⁷ Roesli hoped that this outreach effort would help forge an intimate relationship among artists and audiences throughout Indonesia. From 1998 onwards, a series of commissions from Putu Wijaya’s Teater Mandiri enabled Roesli and his associates at DKSB to compose the musical arrangements for new and innovative plays, such as *Luka* (Scar), performed in Singapore and Germany (2001–02); *Zero*, performed in Taiwan (2003); and *Zoom*,

2003, students, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), musicians (e.g., Harry Roesli), and associations of journalists rallied in support of *Tempo* as the media group became embroiled in a dispute with business tycoon Tomy Winata, leading to the destruction of *Tempo* offices and grievous attacks against reporters, in which police were complicit. See, for instance, “Key Figures Express Support for ‘Tempo,’” *The Jakarta Post*, March 14, 2003; and Janet E. Steele, *Wars Within: The Story of Tempo, an Independent Magazine in Soeharto’s Indonesia* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2005).

⁹⁵ There are slight variations of Roesli’s modified version of “Garuda Pancasila” contained in Diani, “Harry Roesli: Taking Shots at Terror,” *The Jakarta Post*, October 21, 2001; van Dijk, “The Magnetism of Songs,” p. 63; and Subroto, *Professionally Directing People*, p. 41.

⁹⁶ Hera Diani, “Harry Roesli: Taking Shots at Terror.”

⁹⁷ Aendra Medita, “Harry Popularizes Experimental Music,” *The Jakarta Post*, July 12, 2003.

inaugurated in celebration of Teater Mandiri's thirty-third anniversary (2004).⁹⁸ These were arguably the most challenging and rewarding years of Roesli's music career, with the *dalang* composing musical scores for theater audiences worldwide.

Shortly after, it was back to politics, as the Indonesian voting public was being mobilized for the 2004 general elections. Roesli produced songs for the Gerakan Anti Politisi Busuk (Movement against Rotten Politicians), led by a coalition of civil-society organizations, with the intent of improving public awareness of the main electoral issues and the characteristics of individual presidential candidates.⁹⁹ In addition, in January 2004, Roesli joined a protest movement in Bandung, calling for five legislative candidates to be rejected because of their ongoing corruption trials and "crooked" reputations.¹⁰⁰ On the lighter side, Roesli was selected to a jury of celebrities and artists to comment on presidential candidates' singing abilities during Indosiar's television broadcast of *Akademi Fantasi Indosiar* (Indosiar's Fantasy Academy) on June 19, 2004.¹⁰¹ Working alongside Erwin Gutawa and Trie Utami, Roesli witnessed performances by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (Indonesia's current president) and retired General Wiranto, and, having assessed their vocal pitch control and choice of musical arrangement, decided to eliminate both candidates from the show. Regarding a more serious program, on June 30, 2004, Roesli joined a panel of commentators during one of Metro TV's live presidential debates. Roesli's "jocular" comments and feedback included references to the overall performance of each presidential candidate, along with discussions of body language, credibility, and the need for better pitch control when delivering a message to the voting public.¹⁰²

Carry Me Home

Roesli's final editorial for *Kompas* was a amusing rallying cry for Indonesians to "wake up!"¹⁰³ Called "Afternoon Nap," this playful essay highlighted the tendency of politicians to doze off while on official duty, during high-level meetings, and while otherwise "pretending" to form essential policies for the betterment of the population.

⁹⁸ For decades Roesli collaborated with Putu Wijaya, who praised Roesli's ability as a composer: "[Roesli] composes the music for the performance like he is translating the choreography into music." Luka (Scar), as performed by Teater Mandiri in Asia and Europe, was an artistic interpretation of Singaporean Kuo Pao Kun's *The Coffin Too Big for the Hole*. See Yusuf Hartono, "Putu Strives to Save Theater," *The Jakarta Post*, April 8, 2001; "Teater Mandiri hits Singapore Stage," *The Jakarta Post*, September 14, 2001; Tantri Yuliandini, "Teater Mandiri's 'Luka' to Open Laokoon Festival," *The Jakarta Post*, August 16, 2002; and Stevie Emilia, "Teater Mandiri Focuses on Reality," *The Jakarta Post*, May 14, 2004.

⁹⁹ See Muningsari Sri Saraswati, "Elders Call for Informed Vote," *The Jakarta Post*, April 3, 2004; and Sofie Arjon Schütte, "Government Policies and Civil Society Initiatives against Corruption," in *Democratization in Post-Suharto Indonesia*, ed. Marco Bünte and Andreas Ufen (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 81–101. For more on the direct presidential elections of 2004, see Donald K. Emmerson, "A Year of Voting Dangerously?" *Journal of Democracy* 15,1 (2004): 94–108; and Adam Tyson and Paul Tyson, "Dissecting the Attitudes of Political Science Students towards Democracy and the 2004 Elections in Indonesia," *Asian Journal of Political Science* 15,3 (2007): 259–81.

¹⁰⁰ "Protest against Crooked Politicians," *The Jakarta Post*, January 15, 2004.

¹⁰¹ Jennifer Lindsay, "The Performance Factor in Indonesian Elections," in *Elections as Popular Culture in Asia*, ed. Chua Beng Huat (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), p. 67. See also Penelope Cutas, "Fame, Fortune, Fantasi: Indonesian Idol and the New Celebrity," *Asian Journal of Communication* 16,4 (2006): 371–92.

¹⁰² Lindsay, "The Performance Factor in Indonesian Elections," p. 67.

¹⁰³ Harry Roesli, "Tidur... Siang!" *Kompas*, October 31, 2004, p. 16.

Much worse, Roesli charged, the entire nation had been caught napping while police violated their powers, corrupt agents hijacked national development, legislators and bureaucrats abused their good offices, and thieves ransacked poor districts (such as Cicadas, in south Bandung).¹⁰⁴ Roesli conceded that, yes, indeed, people must sleep to stay fit and healthy, and they must also enjoy the innocent pleasures that dreams can sometimes bestow, but now it is time to wake up! In his own words:

Quick, there is already a new government! There is hope that Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) can inspire the nation to wake up! Let's go! Get up! Get up! Let's hope SBY can become *Semua Bangun Yeah!* [Everyone Wake Up Yeah!] Not SBY: *Semua Boleh Tidur lagi* [everyone can carry on sleeping]! *Ayo Karto bangun!* *Ayo Samuel bangun!* *Ayo Ucok bangun!* *Ujang bangun!* [Calling for all the Javanese, Ambonese, Batak, and Sundanese to "wake up" using typical male proper names from each ethnic group]. Wake up police, attorney generals, ministers, and don't take an afternoon nap if there is a meeting to attend!¹⁰⁵

Tragically, at age 53, some five weeks after writing the "Afternoon Nap" editorial, Roesli, who had long suffered from diabetes, hypertension, nerve damage, and heart complications, fell into a fatal coma. Minutes before passing, he experienced one final "lucid interval," a brief moment when he awoke and pleaded with his family: *jangan matikan lampu di meja kerja saya* (don't turn off the lamp on my work desk).¹⁰⁶ To this day, Roesli's wife, Kania, and sons, Yala and Hami, continue to run his music studio and advocate on behalf of the homeless of Bandung.

There were many touching tributes to Harry Roesli written by his family and friends following his death in 2004. Still, his family determined that a simple epilogue was the most appropriate way to seek closure. This came in the form of a song written by Roesli back in 1976 called "Bawalah Aku Pulang" (Carry Me Home). The lyrics read as follows:

... Oh Tuhan	... Oh God
Bawalah aku pulang	Carry me home
Ke tempat yang kutuju	To the place I long for
Ke tempat yang kucinta	To the place I love
... Oh Tuhan	... Oh God
Bawalah aku pulang	Carry me home
Ke tempat yang tercinta	To the place most loved
Segera ...	Quickly ...

¹⁰⁴ For more on social and economic conditions in Cicadas, see Edi Suharto, "Profile and Dynamics of the Urban Informal Sector in Indonesia: A Study of Pedagang Kaki Lima in Bandung" (PhD dissertation, Massey University, 2002).

¹⁰⁵ As Jeremy Wallach kindly pointed out, the admonishment of politicians to stay awake was one of the main themes of Iwan Fals's famous "Wakil Rakyat" (People's Deputy), a song sung by student protesters on the barricades in Jakarta, 1998. Personal communication, February 2010.

¹⁰⁶ Roesli was pronounced dead at 7:55 PM on December 11, 2004, by doctors at Harapan Kita Hospital, Jakarta.



Bawalah Aku Pulang

Roesli achieved a certain distinction throughout his career as a discerning and accomplished character quite different from “the pedant who understands without feeling and the *mondain* who enjoys without understanding.”¹⁰⁷ Strategically positioned within the repressive structures of New Order Indonesia, Roesli struck a balance among musical innovation, political opposition, and social critique with relative impunity. (By comparison, consider, for instance, that, between 1965 and 1979, Pramoedya Ananta Toer was imprisoned and exiled in 1969 to the infamous Buru island prison, and then placed under nominal house arrest in Jakarta from 1980 onwards.¹⁰⁸)

The 1970s have been described as a time of “great cultural vitality” in Indonesia, and identified as the era to which the popular *dangdut* style of music truly “belonged.”¹⁰⁹ Roesli was also a fan of *dangdut*, although his complicated avant-garde compositions, musical collaborations, and social protests were designed to challenge

¹⁰⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ Christopher L. GoGwilt, “Pramoedya’s Fiction and History: An Interview with Indonesian Novelist Pramoedya Ananta Toer,” *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 9,1 (1996): 147–64.

¹⁰⁹ Frederick, “Rhoma Irama and the Dangdut Style,” p. 128.

audiences and create a new artistic niche. Between 1975 and 1976, the staging of *Ken Arok*, the release of *Titik Api*, provocative performances in Semarang, and the Baramaen Festival at Dago Tea House marked Roesli's arrival as a powerful new figure in West Java's performing arts scene. Roesli did not naturally "belong" to the era, but, rather, helped shape a revival of Sundanese musical traditions during a period of fusion and experimentation that was driven by an elite group of visionary artists. Roesli's achievements in West Java suggests that there was a strong counterculture alive in the region, whereby many artists and fans alike rejected flamboyant displays of wealth and the vanity of celebrity.

Referring to the three framing devices used in this article (i.e., musical innovation, politics and censorship, and social criticism), musical innovation took on a regional significance as Roesli experimented with traditional Sundanese culture to address contemporary society. Roesli's avant-garde compositions, theatrical inventions, political satire, and intrepid protests formed a pattern of opposition towards the repressive New Order regime. He used those tools to construct and, at times, elevate public discourses on nationalism, political freedom, culture, and the arts in Indonesia. Roesli accomplished this at a time when the ministry of information was infiltrating the arts and establishing its role as "patron of the arts" in order to co-opt and coerce influential literary figures, poets, musicians, and directors. The arts were only celebrated officially so long as they remained devoid of politics. In this repressive context, Roesli's achievements were quite remarkable.

To conclude, the lifework of Harry Roesli provides a lens through which to view the processes of social change in contemporary Indonesia, particularly in the Sundanese province of West Java. Though difficult to capture, the dynamics of contemporary Indonesian society are represented, in part, by the complex interplay between musical media and political messages. For Roesli, jazz, opera, rock, and Sundanese *gamelan* were among the musical genres used to promote messages concerning political reform and to advocate for individual rights, responsibilities, and freedoms. As an exemplar of the "new tradition" artistic movement, Roesli experimented with traditional Sundanese culture not only to address contemporary issues of truth and social justice, but to change social conditions and public attitudes. During more than three high-profile decades, he introduced and accomplished many artistic innovations and political breakthroughs, although his complex medium and enlightened message were not always in tune with public opinion, nor did they always speak to a wide audience.

Appendix A: The Complete Works of Harry Roesli

Discography

Philosophy of Rock, 1971
Harry Roesli Solo, four volumes released between 1972–1975
Titik Api (Point of Fire), 1976
Ken Arok, 1977
Gadis Plastik (Plastic Virgin), 1977
Lemah Kingkin (The Grieving Land), 1977
Harry Roesli and Kharisma, in two volumes, 1977 and 1978
Tiga Bendera (Three Flags), 1978
Lima Tahun Oposisi (Five Years of Opposition), 1978
Daun (Leaf), 1978
Jika Hari Tak Berangin (If the Day Has No Wind), 1978
Ode dan Ode (Overdose), 1978
Kota Gelap (Dark City), 1979
Harry Roesli and DKSB, 1984
Kuda Rock 'n' Roll (Horse Rock 'n' Roll), 1985
Si Cantik (The Beautiful One), 1997

Collaborations

Musik Akustik Monticelli (Monticelli Acoustic Music), 1977
Renny Jayusman & DKSB, 1984
Asmat Dream, 1988
"Orang Basah" (Wet People), 1991
Cuaca Buruk (Bad Weather), 1992
White Gold, 1995
"Aku Ingin Putus" (I Want To Be Severed), Doel Soembang and Harry Roesli, 2001
On Iwan Fals's In Collaboration With, Harry composed the track "Rinduku," 2003
Jangan Pilih Politisi Busuk (Don't Choose Crooked Politicians), 2004
Rockestra, by Erwin Gutawa, 2006

Film Soundtracks

Cas Cis Cus, directed by Putu Wijaya, 1989
Si Kabayan Saba Kota (Kabayan [a Sundanese character] Goes to Town), 1989
Si Kabayan dan Gadis Kota (Kabayan and City Girl), 1989
Di Sana Senang, Di Sini Senang (Happy There, Happy Here), 1990
Komar Si Glen Kemon Mudik (Komar and Glen [Sundanese characters] Come on Home), 1990
Om Pasikom (a caricature created by GM Sudarta in 1967, featured in *Kompas*), 1990
Si Buta Dari Goa Hantu (The Blind Man from the Haunted Cave), 1990
Si Kabayan dan Anak Jin (Kabayan and the Son of Jin), 1991
Si Kabayan Saba Metropolitan (Kabayan Goes Metropolitan), 1991
Si Kabayan Mencari Jodoh (Kabayan Looks for Jodoh), 1992

Live Performances

Ken Arok Opera, 1975
Musik Bunyi Harry Roesli (Musical Sounds of Harry Roesli, also known as Hospital Music), 1980
Sikat Gigi (Toothbrush Music), 1981
Paranthese (Parentheses), percussion performances at the annual A Mild Jakarta Jazz Festivals of 1988, 1992, and 1995
Off the Record I, II, & III, 1989 and 1992
Asia Pacific Jam, Asian Composers League Conference and Festival, New Zealand, 1992
Tusuk Gigi (Toothpick Music), 1995
Musik Jantung (Heartbeat Music), 1997

Sketsa Lebaran (Lebaran [end of Ramadan celebration] Sketches), a televised opera produced by ANTV and DKSB, 1999

Teroris, Pentas Musik 50 Jam (Terrorist, a 50-hour Music Performance), 2001

Ziarah Seni (Pilgrimage of Art), with DKSB, 2003

Theater Commissions

Opera Ikan Asin (Salted Fish Opera), Teater Koma, 1983

Opera Kecoa (Cockroach Opera), Teater Koma, 1985

Ngeh by Teater Mandiri, Jakarta Art Summit II, 1998

Joko Tingkir theatre with Haviel Perdana Handiman, 2000

Luka (Scar) by Teater Mandiri, Jakarta Arts House, 2001; Victoria Theatre Singapore, 2001; and Laokoon Summer Festival in Hamburg, Germany, 2002

Zero by Teater Mandiri, Asia Meets Asia Festival in Taiwan, 2003

Zoom by Teater Mandiri, thirty-third anniversary celebrations, international tour, 2004