Algorave Music Practice in Indonesia:
Paguyuban Algorave

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This article examines the creative practice of Algorave music in Indonesia, with a focus on the Paguyuban Algorave community based in Yogyakarta. The Algorave movement, which has gained international recognition in recent years, has been observed to amalgamate with local culture, which created a unique musical approach. The research presented in this article delves into the distinctive musical approach of the Paguyuban Algorave community and aims to understand the reasons for its widespread acceptance compared with other forms of computer-aided music. The article also explores the future direction of the Algorave movement in Indonesia, considering the antecedents of Indonesian contemporary music that have contributed to its development in the country. Furthermore, this study investigates the influence of communal and hereditary factors on the community's interactions, communication and knowledge-sharing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Live coding practices, such as Algorave, are a relatively novel phenomenon in the Indonesian music scene. Over the past decade, there have been sporadic activities, but none as consistent as Paguyuban Algorave (PA), which was established in April 2021. These past practices have been largely individual based, with a lack of continuity and adoption as the primary musical practice. This can be attributed to a shortage of creative spaces willing to accommodate this computational-based musical practice. In the formal education sector, the acceptance of contemporary music, both instrumental and electronic, only began in the past five to six years. Nevertheless, any further discussion on this issue will not be undertaken. Instead, this article will delve deeper into exploring the current creative practices and activities of PA.

The main challenge of this article, or any academic article that raises similar issues, is the lack of literacy in the form of publications or academic references that focus on experimental music in Indonesia. Despite this challenge, there has been a recent emergence of literature on experimental music in Indonesia, with one of the seminal publications being *Not Your World Music: Noise in Southeast Asia* (Fermont and Della Faille 2016). This book not only delves into the subject matter of noise music in Southeast Asia but also features an examination of the Indonesian noise scene, providing an insight into the country's noise movement and its cultural and social context. A subsequent publication is *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Sound Art,* edited by S. K. Groth and H. Schulze in 2020. It offers a perspective on sound art in Southeast Asia, including its influences and the topic of environmental noise.

However, it should be noted that these books were released after the emergence of the Algorave movement in Indonesia and do not specifically focus on the creative practices of a specific community within the country, nor are they written in Indonesian. Furthermore, it is crucial to emphasise the significance of literature written by Indonesian authors as it offers a more comprehensive and culturally relevant understanding of the topic. The only locally published textbook that provides information on Western contemporary music and details on contemporary music composers from Indonesia is *History of Music IV* by Professor Dieter Mack of the University of Music in Lübeck, Germany (Mack 2004).

While it is not the primary focus of this article, we posit that the low musical literacy rate in Indonesia may be attributed to the prevalence of oral culture and heredity. Aside from commercially popular music, many musical practices in Indonesia are the continuation of traditional music, which heavily rely on oral transmission as a means of literacy (Goody 2017). The traditional musical ensemble of the gamelan is a striking example of this, where compositions are created for the community, and musical techniques are passed down from one generation to the next without the need for written notation (Pickvance 2005). Despite that, we discovered these cultural aspects are essential to PA, as they are integral to the establishment, activities and sharing of knowledge.

This article is divided into five sections. Section two provides a brief history of experimental electronic music in Indonesia, while sections three and four focus on the rise of the Algorave movement in Yogyakarta, analysing the creative practices of key figures. Lastly, the conclusion examines the future direction of the PA, including current challenges and potential developments.

2. EXPERIMENTAL ELECTRONIC MUSIC IN INDONESIA

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the history and evolution of the live coding community in Indonesia, specifically in Yogyakarta, this section explores the development of electronic music in the country. It covers the early periods (1970–95) and significant events, including the emergence of the Algorave movement in the 2000s. This section focuses on key figures and events that have had a direct and substantial impact on the scene, providing a clear and cohesive understanding of the development of the live coding community. Despite the presence of sporadic movements in experimental music that lack continuity and are isolated, this article focuses specifically on those individuals and events that have played a significant role in the establishment and growth of PA.

2.1. Early period (1970–1995)

Until the time of writing, Indonesia had a lack of resources for advanced performance or education in computer/electronic music. Though most contemporary performing art events are held in Theater Salihara Jakarta, this venue is not specifically dedicated to electroacoustic performances. However, in contrast to this current situation, the musical scene in Jakarta during the 1980s was quite different. This was due to the return of Slamet Abdul Sjukur to Indonesia, who had studied composition and music theory at the Jakarta Institute of the Arts after 14 years of study and living in Paris (mohammadwildan 2016).

Sjukur's close relationship with the Alliance Francoise in Indonesia and his role as music chair at the Jakarta Arts Council facilitated many musical and cultural exchange activities during this period. The most notable event, which could be considered the first live electronic music performance in Indonesia, was a concert by French composer Jean Claude Eloy in 1978, which had a significant impact on subsequent movements in the genre.

The following year, at the first Pekan Komponis Indonesia (Indonesian Composer Festival) in 1979, Otto Sidharta (Figure 1) premiered his first live electronic music piece, *Kemelut* (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta 2021). This was a significant moment in the history of Indonesian music, as it marked the early period of electronic music that had been performed live in the country by Indonesian composers after Eloy's performance.

In 1984, Sidharta further developed his skills and knowledge by studying composition and electronic music with Ton de Leeuw at the Sweelinck Conservatorium (now Amsterdam Conservatory of Music) in the Netherlands, an opportunity that allowed him to gain a deeper understanding of electronic music and bring back this knowledge to Indonesia (Wikipedia 2022).

Another student of Sjukur, Franki Raden, also made a name for himself in the electronic music scene, composing and performing his electronic music and multimedia pieces at Taman Ismail Marzuki and Ancol Jakarta in 1978 and 1979 (Notosudirdjo 2021). However, while Raden was active in this field, only Sidharta is known to have continued to compose and actively teach electronic music until now.

Apart from Jakarta, Yogyakarta also had a significant presence in contemporary music activities during the 1970s and 1980s. New Zealand composer Jack Body was a guest lecturer at the Akademi Musik Indonesia, Yogyakarta, between 1976 and 1977. However, after his death at the age of 70, allegations of sexual misconduct committed during his teaching at the Victoria University of Wellington came to light. This tragic revelation has had a significant impact on his musical legacy, including his influence and contribution to contemporary music education in Indonesia.

During the 1990s, a few notable figures in Indonesia began to delve into the world of electronic music. Among them were Haryo Soejoto (also known as 'Yose'), Sapto Raharjo and Wayan Gde Yudane (Marlita 2016; Figure 2). Of these musicians, Raharjo stood out as an early key figure in the experimental electronic music scene in Yogyakarta. He composed and performed the piece *Kutut Manggung* around 1993 (Wikipedia 2022), which received critical acclaim and helped to establish him as a prominent figure in the Indonesian electronic music scene. In 1997, Raharjo further solidified his place in the scene by improvising on synthesisers and samplers with a percussionist at the Yogyakarta Gamelan Festival (Perlman 1999).

Despite his contributions to the electronic music scene, the origin and extent of Raharjo's artistic influence on electronic music is not well documented in available references. However, his early experimentation and live performances in the 1990s undoubtedly helped to pave the way for future generations of Indonesian electronic musicians and composers in Yogyakarta.

2.2. Events/Festivals and 2000s generation in Yogyakarta

Jogja Noise Bombing is an important organisation that has played a significant role in promoting and supporting experimental music in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This group has been active for over a decade and has been instrumental in fostering a community of musicians and fans passionate about experimental and noise music in Yogyakarta.

Figure 1. Otto Sidharta (left) and Slamet Abdul Sjukur (right). Photo courtesy of Otto Sidharta.

Figure 2. a) Haryo Soejoto; b) Wayan Gde Yudane; c) Sapto Raharjo (Marlita 2016). Photo courtesy of Haryo Soejoto and Wayan Gde Yudane.

Through their annual festival, they bring together noise artists and musicians from all over the world to perform and promote the genre. The festival welcomes all forms of experimental music, regardless of the creative methods used (Rozi 2017). It is important to note that this festival also played a key role in the development of live coding in Yogyakarta. In 2017, the author (Hartono) performed a live coding noise performance using SuperCollider for five years prior to the formation of PA (Jogja Noise Bombing 2017; Figure 3). This performance was one of the early indications of the growing interest in live coding in Yogyakarta, which eventually led to the formation of PA.

In the early 2000s, the three key figures in Yogyakarta, Tony Maryana, Budi Prakosa, and Patrick Hartono, began experimenting with algorithmic live electronic music. They each came from different backgrounds, with Maryana and Hartono having a musical background and Prakosa having no art-related experience but becoming interested in creative coding after joining a local new media art collective. Maryana and Prakosa began their journey with Pure Data and subsequently developed their skills in different areas. Maryana delved deeper into his musical knowledge by exploring Max/MSP (Independent Composers Community Yogyakarta 2016), while Prakosa experimented with various creative music and visual coding platforms, including developing his own open-source synthesiser hardware (Iyok 2018). Hartono, on the other hand, started with Max/MSP, SuperCollider and later explored other areas of creative computation.

Art institutes in Indonesia, specifically in Yogyakarta, do not support or teach any subjects related to electronic music. Tony Maryana (Figure 4),

Figure 3. Jogja Noise Bombing Festival 2017 poster (Jogja Noise Bombing 2017).

who is affiliated with Art Music Today (AMT), an organisation dedicated to contemporary music in Yogyakarta, initiated an electronic music class where he taught Max/MSP to students. Unfortunately, this class no longer exists. Gatot Danar Sulistianto, who is also affiliated with Art Music Today, continues to give free and open lectures, but they are not specifically focused on the computer music context and instead focus on sound engineering.

Lastly, the author Hartono, following Sidharta, pursued computer music and electronic music studies at the Rotterdam Conservatory and Institute of Technology in 2009. He often visits Yogyakarta to give workshops and performances in the related field of electronic music.

Together, Maryana, Prakosa and Hartono can be considered early pioneers of the live coding movement in Yogyakarta, and their diverse backgrounds have contributed to embracing wider interdisciplinary local communities in the practice.

3. THE EMERGENCE OF LIVE CODING IN YOGYAKARTA: *PAGUYUBAN ALGORAVE*

The formation of PA arose from the creation of a study group called Lab Kokokoh, which was initiated by Rangga Purnama Aji in early 2021. This group was focused on investigating the intersections of art, sound and technology. It was attended by five individuals who are now members of PA – Bagas Koro Saputra, Mohammad Ali Azca, Maria Maya Aristya, Muhammad Khoirur Roziqin and Rangga Purnama Aji himself. After the group's first meeting, the members conducted a series of closed activities involving experimentation and research.

At one point, Aji proposed the idea of gathering Indonesian live coders and musicians involved in creative coding in a virtual Algorave concert. This vision was actualised in the Pagelaran Algorave Indonesia #1 concert held on 22 April 2021, coinciding with the official establishment of PA. The organisation aims to connect these individuals with relevant stakeholders in order to provide a platform for networking, learning, performing and presenting their works.

The term 'Algorave' in the organisation's name implies art practices based on live coding; however, PA has expanded its focus to include other creative coding practices such as new media art, generative art and computer science. The organisation's goal is to create a community that is inclusive and embracing of any form of creative coding practices.

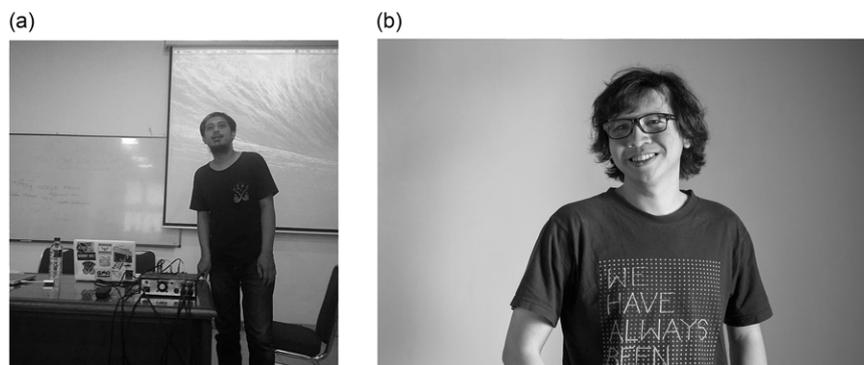Currently, there are 30 members in PA as recorded in the organisation's Telegram group. These members

Figure 4. a) Tony Maryana; b) Budi Prakosa. Photo courtesy of Tony Maryana and Budi Prakosa.

are actively engaged in organising a series of events to showcase their works, including the Latency Music Concert series (1 & 2), Biennale Jogja 2021 (*Radio Isolasido x PAI*), SUMONAR 2021 (*Spectrum Optica*), and Agustusan Algorave (Figure 5). Each of these events provides opportunities for members to network, to learn from one another and to perform and present their works to a broader audience. PA's mission is to create a community of support and collaboration for Indonesian live coders and those involved in creative coding practices. The organisation is actively working towards realising this goal through organising events and connecting with stakeholders.

4. THE INDONESIAN ALGORAVE MUSICIANS/PRACTITIONERS

In this section, an examination is conducted on six members of the PA who exhibited active engagement in performances at the previously mentioned events. The individuals listed in no particular order are Rangga Purnama Aji, Maria Maya Aristya, Rifal Taufani, Louis Marcellino, Ali Azca and Firmansyah Risman. Through interviews with these individuals, insights were gained regarding their initial exposure to Algorave music and their techniques in the composition and creation of music. This examination aimed to comprehend the overall diffusion and development of the Algorave music scene within Indonesia.

In 2017, Rangga Purnama Aji (Figure 6) was first introduced to the concept of live coding by Charles Martin of the Darwin Laptop Orchestra (DLOrk) during their visit to Yogyakarta. Before this encounter, he had unknowingly experienced a live coding performance by the author (Hartono) at the Jogja Noise Bombing festival, although the music presented may have been more closely associated with noise music rather than the genre of Algorave. Subsequently, Aji sought out online resources that provided tutorials on live coding and discovered a series of Algorave videos created by Sam Aaron, the developer of Sonic Pi. From

then on, he began to incorporate live coding into his music practice utilising Sonic Pi and Tidal Cycles as his primary tools. Aji's approach to live coding incorporates both 'from scratch' and 'prepared code' methods, focusing on improvising with sounds such as glitches, percussions, synthesisers, voices and soundscapes. His music reflects a fusion of various genres, including minimalism, EDM/IDM, experimental, breakcore, ambient and traditional Javanese or Sundanese music, which he explores through the use of polyrhythm and pointillism. As one of the early adopters of live coding in Yogyakarta, Aji has inspired many local artists to pursue the practice themselves.

Maria Maya Aristya (Figure 7), a musician and live coder based in Yogyakarta, is among the pioneering female members of PA. Her artistic practice centres on examining the relationship between temporal indeterminacy, cultural elements, minimalist patterns and their application to sound parameters. The introduction to live coding has transformed her understanding of composition and improvisation. With a background in cello performance, her prior knowledge of improvisation focused on the conception of sound and its execution through the instrument. However, through live coding, she has encountered a unique form of improvisation that is centred on editing source code in real-time rather than focusing on the sounds produced. This has provided her with a new perspective on composing music, in which organised materials are not limited to melody and harmonic progression alone. Despite this, she always strives to simplify the process by structuring and rehearsing the discourse of her code and music in advance. By utilising both 'from scratch' and 'prepared code' methods, she is able to minimise the likelihood of syntax errors while maximising efficiency in modifying parameter values. Her primary tool for creative expression is Tidal Cycles.

The proliferation of Algorave music in Yogyakarta can be attributed partly to the use of the internet, particularly social media. In a chance encounter on Instagram, Rifal Taufani (Figure 8) stumbled upon a

Figure 5. Paguyuban Algorave Installation at SUMONAR 2021. Photo courtesy of Rangga Purnama Aji.

Figure 6. Rangga Purnama Aji. Photo courtesy of Rangga Purnama Aji.

post from Brooklyn-based multimedia artist Melody Loveless (@melodycodes) depicting an electronic music performance accompanied by visual projections of code. Intrigued by this form of expression, he embarked on a journey of self-education to learn more about live coding. In 2019, he presented his first live coding performance in his hometown of Madura, which was well received by the audience. Like his peers, Taufani employs the Sonic Pi environment in his performances, utilising both 'from scratch' and 'half-prepared code' methods. His approach to music-making is characterised by the randomisation of musical elements, such as rhythms and timbre, to evoke meditative and contemplative states in listeners.

The practice of live coding is often closely intertwined with the integration of visual elements, which are projected on screens or displayed across various surfaces within the performance venue. These visual elements may include the live coding environment itself, which is processed and manipulated in specific ways. Louis Marcellino (Figure 9), a computer graphic artist, is also a prominent figure in the Algorave music scene in Indonesia. He initially studied digital media design but later dropped out to focus on his interests in live coding and interactive art. His artistic works often incorporate illusions, drawing on his prior experience as a performing magician. His creative approach is influenced by

Figure 7. Maria Maya Aristya. Photo courtesy of Maria Maya Aristya.

artists such as Zachary Lieberman, the developer of the creative coding toolkit OpenFrameworks, and Daito Manabe, the artist-programmer founder of the creative group Rhizomatiks, who was particularly influential in his interest in real-time visuals. Marcellino primarily utilises fragment shaders on the software KodeLife to create real-time graphics in his performances and often collaborates with other live coding practitioners to create an immersive audiovisual experience.

The spread of Algorave music in Yogyakarta has also had an impact on musicians with backgrounds in popular and film music. Ali Azca (Figure 10), for example, was first exposed to Algorave music in 2019 during the OMCMM[1] event, where he met Aji and Marcellino. In early 2020, he began to explore this genre and learn how to use Sonic Pi and Tidal Cycles. One of his primary methods in live coding is to start with a beat and to build upon it with pads and melodies. In addition to the more common styles such as IDM, ambient and glitch music that are typically associated with Algorave performances, Azca is also influenced by local music genres such as Funkkot and Koplo, which can be heard in the beats he uses. Like Taufani, Azca also emphasises the use of random-isation and automation to create contrasts between musical elements.

[1]OMCMM stands for October Meeting – Contemporary Music & Musicians (www.instagram.com/octobermeeting). It is a community that holds art-music, sound and technology-related events mostly in October.

Firmansyah Risman's (Figure 11) interest in Algorave music was sparked after receiving a video on the subject from Aji. Prior to this, he had been familiar with the concept of live coding, but Algorave was a new discovery for him. Before becoming involved in the practice of live coding in 2020, he had already been exhibiting his installation works as a 3D animator since 2017. His artistic works are heavily influenced by the audiovisual performances of Ryoji Ikeda, as well as the musical works of Thom Yorke. His creative process involves collecting sound assets from various artists, which he incorporates into his compositions through experimentation with tools such as FoxDot, SuperCollider and Pure Data.

The practice of live coding has gained traction, especially among the musicians based in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. They have been experimenting with the technique of live coding, which involves manipulating source codes in real-time to create new sounds, patterns and visual effects. Despite the word 'Algorave' in PA, the interviewed members did not seem interested in discussing the 'rave' aesthetic itself. Although many of their influences are associated with EDM and IDM, minimalism is also a recognisable approach in their music, as demonstrated in the works of Aristya and Aji. Another example is Taufani, whose approach is also somewhat meditative. It is also worth noting that the internet and social media have played a significant role in spreading Algorave music in Yogyakarta.

5. CONCLUSION

In this final section, we present a comprehensive conclusion that embodies the various factors that had a profound impact on the establishment of PA in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. We not only delve into the potential future prospects of this community but also address the persistent issue of gender imbalance that is prevalent not only within the PA community, but also across the artistic realm in Indonesia. This conclusion serves as a testament to our findings and provides valuable insights into the antecedents of contemporary music in Indonesia, with a particular emphasis on the Algorave movement. It is our aim that this conclusion serves as a useful reference for future studies.

5.1. Cultural influences

As previously mentioned, contemporary music activity in Indonesia is a continuation of traditional practices where oral tradition and heredity play a significant role. According to Rachel Hand's paper 'Schools and Families as Institutions of Learning in Central Javanese Gamelan' (Hand 2018), the 1950s marked the advent of formal education in traditional

Figure 8. Rifal Taufani. Photo courtesy of Rifal Taufani.

Figure 9. Louis Marcellino. Photo courtesy of Louis Marcellino.

Figure 10. Ali Azca. Photo courtesy of Ali Azca.

Javanese performing arts in Central Java, and this has become the primary avenue for individuals to pursue a career in traditional music. However, this standardisation of education deviates from the traditional methods of learning, which typically involve a combination of a familial background in the arts and performing from a young age. Hand further observed that despite this shift in educational approach, some of the traditional artists have transitioned to become educators at art institutes in Indonesia. While many students come from artistic backgrounds, some are established artists.

Drawing from the author's (Hartono) personal experience while studying at the Yogyakarta Institute of Arts, it is clear that the method of learning through heredity, where one learns from a respected and considered elder, is still very strong. This can be attributed to the local culture and the factors previously mentioned. Even today, this learning method continues to play a vital role in knowledge transmission, even within institutionalised settings.

Figure 11. Firmansyah Risman. Photo courtesy of Firmansyah Risman.

In the context of PA, the author's interviews with members revealed that the dissemination of knowledge regarding live coding was heavily influenced by the aforementioned heredity approach. As Aji recounted, the author's (Hartono) performance at Jogja Noise Bombing piqued his interest in this field. However, being unfamiliar with live coding and the performance being at a noise festival, he was unaware of the live coding aspect of the performance. Within the PA community, other members initially encountered or learned about live coding through Aji, making him a key figure in the dissemination of live coding knowledge to the rest of the group, as previously detailed.

5.2. 'Paguyuban': more than just a community

As previously mentioned, 'Paguyuban' is a Javanese term referring to a community or group. Similar to other forms of performing arts in Indonesia, the communal factor has been integrated into the way of life and artistic interaction within the group. This can be observed in the Gamelan ensemble, where despite the professional relationship among its members, they also maintain a deeper connection in daily life and, in some cases, even reside in the same neighbourhood or village.

The adoption of the term 'Paguyuban' within the PA community of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, holds a deeper cultural significance beyond just its literal definition of 'community'. In this context, 'Paguyuban' embodies a strong sense of belonging and community among its members. The close relationships between the members of the PA community outside of their artistic practices directly contribute to their sense of communal belonging and their shared commitment to the movement in experimental electronic music. This community serves as a symbol of the country's progressive and continuous experimentation in the genre and is a testament to the power of community in cultural expression.

5.3. Gender imbalance

The Indonesian music community continues to face the challenge of gender imbalance, where women, despite their substantial contributions, remain underrepresented in influential positions and frequently relegated to the margins in public forums. This disparity is manifested in the unequal allocation of opportunities and resources, including limited access to performance venues, recording studios and educational opportunities.

However, it is crucial to consider the cultural context of Indonesia, particularly in Yogyakarta, where strong Javanese traditions still shape the roles of women in society. The issue of gender imbalance is complex, and it is difficult to draw conclusions without considering the cultural perspective. In this particular community, there is only one female participant, and upon inquiry, most members acknowledge the issue and recognise it as a problem. Nonetheless, this should not be taken as a blanket indictment, as the cultural lens through which these individuals view the issue is vastly different from the Western world, where gender imbalance is more openly addressed.

This issue is not limited to the music community in Indonesia but extends to other artistic communities in the country as well. Although it falls outside the scope of this article, by bringing attention to it, we hope to raise awareness and facilitate a change for the better in the future.

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