

The Proxemics Principal on Angklung Performance and Its Space in the Bale Karesmen Venue

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ABSTRACT

Angklung, being one of the most iconic traditional instruments in Indonesia, is the pride and joy of the Sundanese people. That said, this form of musical art should be preserved and passed down to the next generations by teaching it and by performing it to encourage both domestic and international masses to continue to appreciate it. For the performance to impact the audiences, some interaction should be established between the performers and the audiences. Messages of the performed art could be communicated through interpretation and feelings. Moreover, there is a way of playing angklung in which there would be a group of people required to play it. A person could play as little as one angklung to represent one musical note. In the Bale Karesmen venue, this way of playing is played in a segment, where the audiences each get an angklung to play along, in which they would have to communicate with the conductor to know when to ring their instrument. This study is meant to look into an example of an enclosed performance space, Bale Karesmen, in the eyes of proxemics study and interior design. They analyze how the distance and shape of the space play a part in forming a spatial formation according to the social comfort and interaction of the people within that space. Through observation, interviews, and analysis, the author attempts to understand how the space would play a part in the non-verbal communication between the stage and the audience seats.

Keywords: Proxemics, Interior Design, Angklung, Art Communication, Music Performance

Introduction

Angklung is widely known in Indonesia as a Sundanese bamboo percussion music instrument that in one way of playing requires a whole group of musicians to play it, for a single instrument can only play one note. A person could be handling multiple instruments as a set, but sometimes angklung is played by multiple people handling as little as one instrument per person to play together in a group (Ali, 2009). This way of playing is used in an interactive angklung performance where the audiences are invited to play along with the performers. This instrument is known to bring benefits because of how it has been played. An Article from *Kompasindo*, an online newsletter, states that playing angklung teaches the younger generation to cooperate in group works, take responsibility, discipline, and even precision. This instrument can also encourage psychomotor development for its player by practicing body coordination with the rhythm of the music. Furthermore, this musical instrument dates to a long time ago in Sundanese history, with the philosophy of unity and is believed to build patriotic feeling for the people that both plays and listens to it, making it a cultural treasure deserving of preservation and appreciation (Suparlan, 1996).

Like other musical performances, Angklung's performance creates interactions between the performers and the audiences beyond performing and enjoying the performance, usually unconsciously. In this case, some angklung performances invite the audiences to participate in the musical activity (Davies, 1999). Though this kind of performance creates direct social

interactions between the musicians, the conductor, and the audiences, there would still be other aspects that create these invisible interactions between these individuals. This interaction is known as musical communication, a more complex connection formed in musical performance settings. Musical communication heavily relies on interpretation through reasonings and meaning discursively, unlike the usual verbal and written form of communication (Dillistone, 2002).



Figure 1. An angklung performance played by a group of people.

In an example in *Komunikasi Senior Art Communication*, the narrator on stage may communicate with the audience, but their response is limited to their competence (Santosa, 2011), meaning that the communication usually goes one way. However, in the interactive angklung performance, it is proven that the interactions go at least two ways because of how engaged the audiences are to the performance itself. The Indonesian government is confronted with several issues relating to developing tourism regions, both domestic and international (Andiyan & Cardiah, 2021). While they look out for visual and auditory cues, they can answer back with the sound of the angklung they are playing. Compared to some other musical performances where the audiences are obligated to limit their response to claps in appreciation, the audiences are free to sing along in addition to playing the angklung. This may present uniqueness to the interactive angklung performance, even as far as why the Bale Karesmen, the case study of this research, preserves to this day by giving creative options to experience angklung experience (Ching, 2014).

A performance space does not function only for performances but also as a space to promote culture, in which the art manifests with the context of its environment, including the local people and their ideology (Sumarjo, 2001). This traditional form of arts can also 'communicate' the local values by interpreting every sound, movement, and part of the show itself (Soetrisno, 2004). According to (Utama, 2017), the role of space may support the success of a performance by producing special significances and feelings. According to the purpose, there are a few kinds of space and the sensation produced when performing: the meditative space, the reflection space, communication space, and the memory space. The audiences could interpret each of those spaces into different feelings and significances. Perceptually, the space used by men is not always restricted to our visual sense, but it is much more complex than that. Perception is formed through environmental data collected with someone's senses and processed in their brain to form a conclusion. This way, the design of the space would carry significance to someone's perception depending on their experience within the space (Cassirer, 1990).

Proxemics study is essentially how people are unconsciously involved in a structure of space and physical Distance (Ham, 1972). The main objective of this study is to observe how much distance is necessary for an individual and another individual, breaking it down into categories depending on the interactions formed between them. In (Hall & Hall, 1966), it is mentioned that the structure of space between two or more persons could be seen as a way of non-verbal communication beyond the language and culture barrier (Tulistyantoro, 2020).

There are three forms of basic theory assumption for interpersonalSpacee written in the Hidden Dimension book, which is:

1. Fixed Feature Space: the form of a space primarily expected in the culture the space is in. this space is often taken for granted and can be used as a criterion to define the "identity" of a space. Like how a bedroom became a bedroom, and a hospital became a hospital because of its designated purpose and the expected furniture. This space is also assumed to be primarily unchanged so that it is stable. A manifestation of a hidden design formed over time by people who uses it. With this understanding, fixed feature space can define a standard to measure the user's activity and social pattern.
2. Semi Fixed Feature: the form of space customizable to the users. For example, in a hospital ward, each patient has side tables on which they can put their belongings. This space can be "felt" through the size of the furniture, the height of the ceiling, the safety of the space, and the atmosphere the space give off. The user would mark this space with their belongings, and it would communicate some of their personality through the characteristics of their stuff. This space could be physically measured for the thing that makes the space itself could be measured and considered the barriers.
3. Informal space is informal because it is unstated, not that it lacks importance. This space is mostly outside awareness, for it is the space that immediately surrounds us. The size of this space varies according to the given characteristics and the individual's condition, and the border is invisible, meaning that there are no physical borders to this space.

IN HIS BOOK, Edward T. Hall also mentioned that these spaces can have one of the two characteristics, sociopetal or sociofugal. Sociopetal is a space that encourages involvement between two or more individuals, while sociofugal is the opposite(Andreas, 2008). An easy example for sociopetal would be the counter of an apothecary and the separated seating in a train station waiting area for sociofugal.

When discussing distances between two or more individuals, it should be remembered that humans and most creatures on the planet are territorial. This study was conducted long ago by first observing the animals in the wild before it realized that we humans also, unconsciously or not, like to maintain certain distances from other people(Budianto, 2007). This, of course, does not go as simple as maintaining distances between strangers and non-strangers. Instead, we rely on our senses and categorize other people according to how comfortable we are around them and what kind of interaction we are going to do with them by essentially manifesting invisible layers of bubbles of social comfort. These bubbles are separated by distances, which is why the shape and the size of physical space would matter to this invisible spatial structure when it comes to the design(Jones, 1980). Of course, these distances cannot always be maintained, especially in a more modern way of living where people sometimes have to cramp in an elevator (Brandon & Soedarsono (Raden Mas, 2003). They would have to cope in those situations, but this does not mean that these preferred distances are irrelevant anymore. A space design could help them maintain their comfort for an extended period. These distances of interpersonal space, according to Hall, are as follows:

1. Intimate Distance: Distance for intimate physical contact or at least close enough for the high chance of physical contact such as embracing and whispering – 0" -6" (close phase), 6" -18" (far phase)
2. Personal Distance: Distance where one can still touch other people but not as intimate as intimate distance, usually for good friends and family - 1,5'-2,5' (close phase), 2,5'-4' (far phase)
3. Social Distance: Distance for when one is having a social interaction with someone else, they would use their normal voice in order for the other to hear them. Usually for friends and acquaintances – 4'-7' (close phase), 7'-12' (far phase)

4. **PublicDistance:** Distance used for public speaking. This distance could stretch beyond, but the quality of the speech would decrease at certain distances since the facial expression and gestures would not be visible so far away. 12'-25' (close phase), 25'-beyond (far phase)

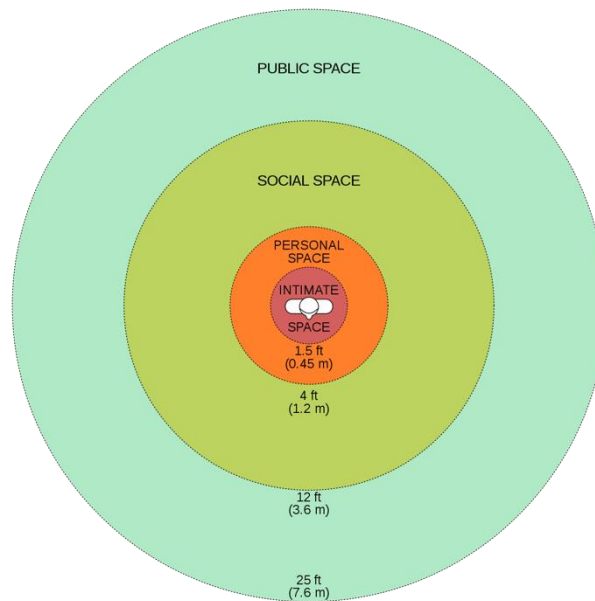


Figure 2. The interpersonal distance chart according to Edward T. Hall.

These distances, of course, are not always uniform as they can be varied according to the culture and environment of a person as it would create a different perception of interpersonal distance comfort (Tandyonomanu & Bahfiarti, 2013). For example, some people from different parts of the world speak louder, and because aural is one of the considerations in making up these numbers, those two different cultures would have smaller or bigger zones. Other inputs that synthesized the distance other than aural are kinesthetic, olfactory, thermal, and visual (Piliang, 2006).

Methods

This research was done with the qualitative method. Observation, documentation, and interviews were done to collect data for the analysis step of the research, where the data would be reviewed with the base theories from the references. The venue's space, Bale Karesmen, was observed and mapped out before the author studied the activity and the users during the performance for contexts (Sugiyono, 2012). Some of the inside sources that were interviewed were Kang Taufik Udjo as the director of Saung Angklung Udjo and the eighth child of Mang Udjo, Kang Chandra as the performance manager and the grandchild of Mang Udjo, The Tania as the MC of the performances, Kang Sam Udjo as the head of the AWI community as well as the seventh child of Mang Udjo, and also Kang Clip as the local angklung craftsman (Moleong, 2007).

Results and Discussions

Bale Karesmen is the only enclosed performance venue in Saung Angklung Udjo (SAU), a family run Angklung haven located in Bandung, Indonesia. It is a local icon amongst the traditional musician community in West Java, known for its excellence in preserving the culture while considering the change of times, actively finding new ways to keep the public interested in the traditional music instrument (Wardani, 2010). Some of the activities in this establishment include bamboo music instruments workshop, angklung playing workshop, and

angklung performances. Bale Karesmen is a separated structure intended to hold performances. The whole structure is designed to host a show. Though the design of the interior has changed over the years, the function and the areas of the space do not.

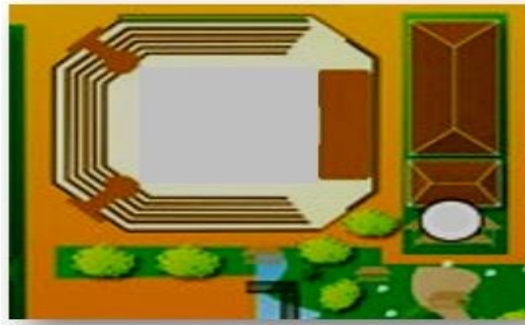


Figure 3. The position of the performance venue in Saung Angklung Udjo.

The stage in Bale Karesmen is technically called an arena, where the position of the main stage is on the center of the room with either rectangular or curved shape. From the theory for this kind of stage, the shape could affect the intimacy between the performers and the audiences because it lacks physical boundaries between them, giving the audiences more visual freedom of the performance (M, 1990). The main stage is not leveled as well. Instead, the audiences' seats are on multiple different levels, and the second stage for the supporting music instruments is on three different levels, located just behind the center stage.



Figure 4. The visual of Bale Karesmen in an empty state.

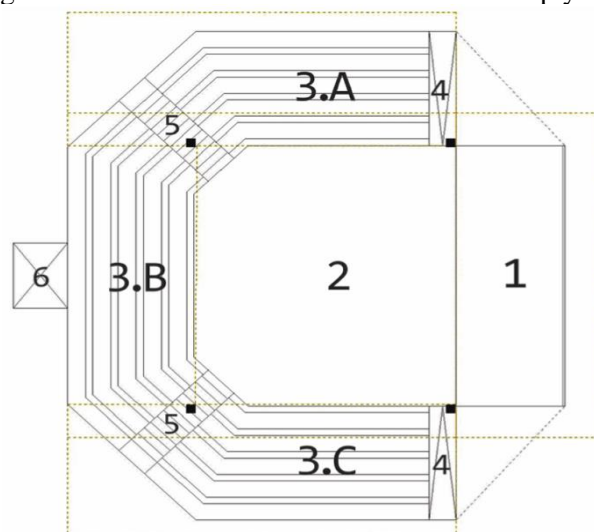


Figure 5. (1) elevated stage for the supporting music and gamelan, (2) the main stage, (3) audiences' seats, (4) performers' entrances, (5) audiences' entrance, (6) sound and light control booth.

The structure of the roof and ceiling is designed with the concept of classic traditional Sundanese and an amphitheater underneath it. To measure and educate public awareness in implementing health protocols, further research is needed (Cardiah, Andiyan, & Rahma, 2021). The size is more or less 225m², with the seating made of concrete and wood. It is meant to accommodate audiences, though, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is reduced to accommodate 35-50 people on the audience seating two times a month while the regular show schedule is done virtually using YouTube, Zoom, or Instagram.

The whole performance includes angklung, dance, singing, and interactive games. They do not forget comedy in the true style of Sundanese entertainment. Though that said, the central performance is, of course, the angklung performance. With the positions of the gamelan players, band, and singers on the elevated stage, the angklung players on the main stage area in the middle of the room. The conductor takes place between the angklung players and the middle audiences as they would be the one who verbally interacts with the audiences most.



Figure 6. The visual of the elevated stage.



Figure 7 & 8. The visual of the middle stage.



Figure 9. the position of the audience during the activity segment.

Even during the non-activity segment, it can be felt that the room is festive and full of energy. The performers all encourage the audiences to interact. They spontaneously sing and even dance along with the performers. When it comes to education, the COVID-19 epidemic has had a major effect, particularly on distance learning techniques that must be completed online (Andiyan et al., 2021).

With this shape of space and the distance between each area, it becomes apparent that the atmosphere felt complete. The shape of the layout made the whole space sociopetal. Everyone seems like they are connected. The distances between the supporting music on the elevated stage are enough for the people to communicate verbally on average speaking volume (social distance) up until the closest side of the center stage. This distance is appropriate because when it comes to the audience and most of the performers on the center stage, they do not need to communicate in normal speaking voice verbally; instead, the sound of their instruments does the communication. The people on center stage, as the spotlight place, also has the appropriate distances. They could, if necessary, verbally talk on average volume up to the elevated stage and the audience. However, the sound of their instruments could reach the room evenly thanks to the positioning.

Moreover, just as importantly, because of the way the center stage has the lowest floor leveling, it guarantees even the audiences on the very back of the audience seats the ability to visually interact with the performers. This should be underlined because the center stage is the stage where the dancers and the conductor are positioned, in which these people are the ones who do the most visual interactions with both the people on the audience seats and the elevated stage. This is especially useful during the segment in which the audiences are given an instrument to play a song together because they would have to pay auditory attention to the instruments the other people are playing and pay visual attention to the conductor for the cues ring their instrument. The extension is an active procedure requiring contact between the extension worker and the individual to establish a behavior change process (Sulandjari et al., 2022).

Conclusion

Bale Karesmen, as an iconic venue for the angklung music instrument, has spent many years actively attempting to keep preserving and promoting the culture to both domestic and international tourists (Priyanto, Yuliyanto, & Musthofa, 2017). It has proven itself successful just from how it is still standing today, even in the trying time of the pandemic where public gathering places are declining. The way the performances keep the audiences engaged with interactions and communications, be it verbal or non-verbal, may be the cause of this success, but the Space also plays a part. The shape of the audience seats and the stages makes non-verbal interactions easy to do. The distances between each area and how each area is leveled are proper to the auditory and visual interactions happening during the performances.

With this study done and analyzed, it is concluded that further research can be done in the future. With more data and more references, a new point of view may be discovered to either support this study or create another argument worthy of discussion. For example, the volume of sound or the visual clarity of the gestures within the space could be a focus of study for the following research.

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