

Sindhenan in Karawitan Arts

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ABSTRACT

Sindhenan is a part of *Karawitan* arts which improves the sense of aesthetic in the music art. *Sindhenan* is a vocal practice following the rhythm of gamelan music with distinctive voicing techniques based on Javanese aesthetic concept. These vocal techniques include the technique of *luk*, *wiled*, *gregel*, *angkatan*, *seleh*, and breathing technique. The concept of a quality *sindhenan* is known as *nggendingi* meaning which includes *mungguh*, *ngledheki*, *lelewa*, *pas*, *ngenongi*, *nggandhul*, *selingan*, and *andhegan*. The vocals are performed by the singers (*pesindhen*) through a long training that repeatedly adjusts to the sound of the gamelan tuning. Also, some singers or *pesindhen* sometimes make interesting movements and attitudes while singing. Generally, singers as ensemble and accompaniment of *pakeliran* style prioritize their voice colour, voicing technique, and vocabulary mastery of the song sentences. Singers are required to always be in prime condition as well as spectacular in their appearance because they are the audience attention. The main function of *sindhenan* is to enrich the aesthetic value in the performance. A good singer (*pesindhen*) is required to have wide communication skills and great vocal skills for singing songs (*tembang*). The presence of a singer is one of determining factors for a success show. The singer is able to bring up a good show through her quality and professionalism such as character, charisma, charm, and a considerable virtuosity in a performance. Empirical reality shows that the presence of singers tends to be the centre of public attention in almost every performance either as *karawitan* shows or as puppet shows (*wayang*). The singers who have a good vocal will support the performance of a mastermind (*dalang*).

Keywords: *Sindhenan, Karawitan, Arts*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the performance of gamelan music arts, there are vocals performed by male and female gamelan musicians. The vocal is necessary for a part of performing arts quality. So that it is rarely found in music arts including *karawitan* arts, *pakeliran* accompaniment and composition that do not involve vocals. Gamelan music instrumental mostly occurs at music festivals in which have a predetermined nature in the process of practicing playing gamelan instruments. In the women's *karawitan* competition, the voice of singers supports to improve the level of aesthetic value. Women's vocals in *karawitan* are well known as *Sindhenan* [1]. The type of female vocal voice is usually performed by women who have been trained in the field of music arts. On the other hand, there is also a limited circle of male singers (*pesindhen*) [2]. Male singers are usually limited to certain genres (*gending*) and have a unique characteristic as for the scenes of guest star. Moreover, in Surakarta, there is a man who sings a female singer's songs such as Wawin Laura (*sindhenan*). He usually sings the song just as a

guest star in the show, not as complete purposes as if he performs from the beginning to the end of the show.

Generally, a singer (*pesindhen*) is a professional job. In Purwa Wayang performances and ensembles, there are a number of singers which in total five or more singers who sing their voice in the form of *sindhenan*. In the history, there are more than a hundred years since *sindhenan* songs have been enjoyed by their audience. *Sindhenan* needs techniques such as vocal techniques including *luk*, *wiled*, *gregel*, *angkatan*, *seleh*, and breathing techniques [3]. Therefore, in order to carry out a good *sindhenan*, Surakarta district needs a *sindhenan* concept called *nggendingi*.

A perfect concept includes *mungguh*, *ngledheki*, *lelewa*, *pas*, *ngenongi*, *nggandhul*, *selingan*, and *andhegan*. Both concepts and techniques of vocal must be integrated into the singer's skills (*pesindhen*) while performing. However, the problem is that how are the techniques of *sindhenan*

and the concept of taking vocal in the performance occurred?

Pesindhen is a term that refers to individual as the main vocalist in the *karawitan* arts in which most of the main vocalists are women. Meanwhile, according to current needs, there are also male singers (*pesindhen*) such as Wawin Laura, a host



Figure 1. *Sindhenan* Animation

from a private television station of TATV Surakarta. There is a general limitation that a *sindhen* is as a female vocal in the *karawitan* arts. Also, instead of *pesindhen*, there are several terms that are often used such as *swarawati* and *waranggana*. A singer (*pesindhen*) who dances while performing called as *tandhak*, *tledak*, *tayub*, *gambyong*, *emprak*, and *bedhayan*. The singers should emphasis on their vocals which is interesting, pleasant and flexible to be heard [4].

Pesindhen or *Sindhen* comes from Javanese language which is a term for women who generally as the only singer and sing along with a gamelan orchestra. *Sindhen* is a female singer who sings Javanese classical songs to the accompaniment of gamelan or *karawitan* arts [5]. Nevertheless, the singers are sometimes accompanied by male *weranggana* as a backing vocalist. The male *weranggana* does not only sing but he also plays other musical instruments such as *rebab* (Javanese violin) or *gender* (a type of metallophone).

A good singer (*pesindhen*) is required to have wide communication skills and great vocal skills for singing songs (*tembang*). The presence of a singer is one of determining factors for a success show. The singer is able to bring up a good show through her quality and professionalism such as character, charisma, charm, and a considerable virtuosity in a performance. Empirical reality shows that the presence of singers tends to be the centre of public attention in almost every performance either as *karawitan* shows or as puppet shows (*wayang*). The

singers who have a good vocal will support the performance of a mastermind (*dalang*).

Sindhenan is a vocal material that contains of *Garap Ricikan* which has elements or structures include text and songs that must be processed and translated through musical language [3]. In Surakarta, *sindhenan* can be divided into two groups, namely: general *sindhenan* and special *sindhenan*. General *sindhenan* or *Sindhenan* *Srambahan* is usually used to sing all musics (*gending*) by using *cakepan*, *wangsalan*, *abon-abon/isèn-isèn*, and *parikan* (*traditional poetry*) [6]. Yet, special *sindhenan* is a *cakepan* song that can only be used for singing certain *gending*. In *sindhenan*, there are various concepts and techniques. These concepts include *mungguh*, *ngledheki*, *lelewa*, *pas*, *nggandul*, *ngenongi*, *andhegan*, *selingan* which is also well known as *nggendingi* [7]. Besides, *sindhenan* has important elements in *gending* that relate to one another as follows:

1.1. Text Structure

Text structure is an element which includes *wangsalan*, *abon-abon/isèn-isèn*, *parikan*, *senggakan*, *macapat*, *sekar ageng*, *sekar tengahan*, and *sekar bebas*; and the element of songs which are rhythm, *pitch*, *cengkok* (twisted sound), dan *pathet* (Javanese gamelan hirarcies tonal system). The texts include literary works which can be interpreted based on the users' understanding and importance (double interpretations). Commonly, the song's meaning of a *sindhenan* is covered in a form of a *cakepan* (text) which can be selected from some provided literature alternatives. In the performance of *Sindhenan* *Gending*, *cakepan* (text)/ *wangsalan* which is played contains various themes such as education, agriculture, house works life, social life guidance, events, and situations around the stage. Those problems and dilemmas are expressed in the form of *wangsalan*, *parikan*, *pepantunan*, and *senggakan*. Among the many *cakepan* provided, no all will be arranged altogether in one *gending* performance. However, it will be arranged according to the type of *sindhenan* which each *sindhenan* has a different basic arrangement. Here are the text structures.

1.1.1. *Cakepan/Wangsulan*

Cakepan is a sentence that includes one or two phrases, contains riddles, and provides the answers in the sentences [8]. Owing to the riddle's characteristic, to look for the answers should link the words in the sentences. *Padmosoekotjo* [9] in his book entitled *Ngèngrèngan Kasusastran Djawa II* mentioned that *wangsalan* can be broadly classified into four kinds, those are *wangsalan lamba*,

wangsalan rangkep (camboran), wangsalan memet, and wangsalan padintenan. Among them, *wangsalan rangkep (camboran)* is commonly used in *sindhenan* songs. It is one of the types of *wangsalan* which has more than one answer. It has two phrases which the first one contains a question and the second one is the answers.

e.g.: *Wangsalan 8 wanda* (syllables)

Welut wana kawula amung saderma..... welut wana (ula)

Kawi sekar den sugih tepa salirakawi sekar (puspa)

Wangsalan 12 wanda:

Kawis pita kang lata kinter ing toya

Aja uwas, den sumarah mring

Hyang Sukma

Note: *Kawis pita* is *maja*

lata kentir ing toya is sarah/ uwuh/sampah/ waste

Wohing aren, pangucape janma nendra

Dipun eling sabar niring dur angkara

Note: *Woh ing aren* is *kolang- kaling*

Pangucape janma nendra is *nglindur*

Wangsalan 8 wanda:

Aran ludiraning wreksa,

ywa kapatuh ngumbar karsa

Note: *Ludarinmg wreksa* is *thluth/getah/ mucilage.*

Kemangi wulung gagangny

Den welas asih sasama

Note: *Kemangi wulung gagangnya* is *telasih*

1.1.2. *Abon – abon*

In *sindhenan*, *abon – abon* is also called *isèn-isèn*. Its function is as an interlude or complement. In the Javanese dictionary (Bausastra Jawa), *abon-abon* means *ubarampé slametan*. The word *ubarampé* means completeness or complement. *Abon – abon* is a text in the form of a word or words which do not have related sentence meaning with the main texts (*sindhenan*), hence it can be stated that its position is only as an interlude. Therefore, the word *abon – abon* in Javanese dictionary with the meaning in the *sindhenan* songs has a similar meaning which is as an interlude and as a supplementary text to complete the need of one sentence of a song or one *gendhing* part.

E.g.: *Rama-rama, ya nduk, gones, yomas-yomas, wong kuning, wong manis, bapakne, thole, ramane dhewe, raden, gonas ganes, wicarane, ayem tentrem sawangane, gandhes luwes sasolahe, rompyoh-rompyoh sesinome, anteng tajem polatane*

1.1.3. *Parikan*

Parikan is a sentence that contains two phrases between the last words of the first phrase and the second which have the same sounds.

E.g.: *Rujak nanas pantes den wadahi gelas, tiwas-tiwas nglabuhi wong ora nggagas Rujak degan esih legan ja kluyuran, kudu ngeman ndhak urip dadi cacadan.*

1.1.4. *Senggakan*

Senggakan has a basic word *senggak* which means *njuwaragijak aramé mbarengi (njamboengi / connect) oenining gamelan*. Based on the performance, *senggakan* in *karawitan* has a noisy and lively impression. Thus, *senggakan* can be translated as vocal group or solo using *cakepan parikan* and or a series of words (sometimes without meaning) as the backing noise or to make the situation or lively in a *gendhing* performance. *Senggakan* is soft which means it can be interpreted by anyone with various meanings as long as it is logical and contextual.

The examples in the form of vowels: *oeo, aea, eoe, aeoeao* (in *Ladrang Gegot, inggah gendhing Onang-onang*). The examples in the form of words: *sayuk rukun, ayem tentrem* (in *Ladrang Mugirahayu*)

1.1.5. *Tembang Macapat*

Tembang is also often mentioned as *sekar macapat, sekar alit, or sekar dhagelan*. Saputro in his book entitled *Sekar Macapat* mentioned that *macapat* is a form of Javanese poetry that uses a new Javanese language. It is tied in with rhymes, such as *guru gatra, guru wilangan, and guru lagu*. Therefore, *sekar macapat* or *tembang macapat* can be translated as one of the forms of *sekar (tembang)* which uses the determined rules of *guru wilangan* and *guru lagu*. Every kind of *tembang macapat* has different numbers of *gatrayang*. In addition, to differentiate each type of *sekar macapat* is seen from the number of *gatra, guru lagu, and guru wilangan*.

E.g.: *sekar macapat adalah Sinom, Dandanggula, Pangkur, Asmarandana, Kinanthi, Pucung, Mijil, Gambuh, Megatruh, dan sebagainya.*

1.1.5.1 *Sekar Tengahan*

Sekar tengahan is used in *sindhenan* in *genhing* performance can be found in *gendhing-gendhing sekar*. *Sekar tengahan* is one of the *tembang waosan kekawin* forms which uses *sekar (tembang / poems)* without any rules of *lampah* or *pedhotan* inside it. This kind of *Sekar* is also called *tembang tri lagu* which is *tembang waosan ketiga*. One of the texts which is used in *sindhenan* song is *sekar tengahan*.

E.g.: *Balabak Tinjomaya, laras pelog pethet nem, Balabak Patranala, laras slendro pathet sanga.*

1.1.5.2. Sekar Ageng

Sekar ageng is one of the forms of *tembang waosan kekawin* or also can be called *maca salagu* and *rolagu* which uses *sekar* (*tembang/poems*) with rules of *lampah* or *pedhotan* inside it. This *sekar* can be used for *gendhing*, particularly *gendhing Surakartan* and *Yogyakarta*.

E.g.: *Sekar Ageng Sudirawicitra: lampah 12, pedhotan 5-7 laras pelog pathet nem.*

1.1.5.3. Sekar Bebas

Sekar bebas (free) is the type of *sekar* which does not bound or tied to *guru lagu, guru wilangan, lampah, and pedotan*. It is formed freely only for the special purpose of *garap sindhenan* in *gendhing-gendhing* which is bening performed. The song structure of the second *sindhenan* structure which is very important is "song" which has rhythm, pitch, *cengkok*, dan *pathet*. Irama Supanggih in the book entitled *Bothekan Karawitan I* mentioned that rhymes can be seen in two sides which are rhythm that is related to the aspect of space and rhythm which is connected with the aspect of time. Space here means imaginary space, an abstract place inside the mind of *pengrawit*.

The rhythm which is connected to time in Javanese *karawitan* is usually identified as the travel time or it is usually said as *tempo gending / song* by the musicians. The song tempo is classified into three levels, those are *tamban* (*alon/slow*), *sedheng* (*sedang/medium*), and *seseg* (*cepat/fast*).

1.1.6. Laras

According to Supanggih, *laras* is defined as a thing which is pleasant or enjoyable tone to hear and feel. *Laras* also be defined as a tone, a sound which has been decided its frequency (*penunggul, gulu, dhada, pelog, lima, nem, and barang*). *Laras* also has a meaning as a musical scale/gamme, it refers to tone arrangement which its amount and its sequence tone has been decided.

The example of arrangement and interval pattern of *laras slendro*:

1 2 3 5 6 i Ji Ro Lu Mo Nem

Ji 1= *Panunggul*, 2 = *Gulu*, 3= *Dhada*, 5 = *Lima*, dan 6 = *Nem*.

Beside of five crucial tone above, there is also some others *laras* or tones, for instance, (1) *barang*, it refers to *Gembayangan* tone from *penunggul*, its symbol is "i", it is read /ji/, (2) *Manis* (Sweet), that

is a *gembayangan hulu* tone, its symbol is number "2" (number two with dot above). Then, there is a structure/system tone arrangement which consist of 5 or 7 tone in one *gembyang* with using tone spacing pattern and not balance. This tone arrangement is called *laras pelog*.

For example:

Pelog Nem 5 6 1 2 3 5 6 1 2 3 Ma nem ji ro lu ma nem ji ro lu
5 6 1 2 4 5 6 1 2 3 Ma nem ji ro pat mo nem ji ro lu
Pelog Barang 5 6 7 2 3 5 6 7 2 3 Ma nem pi ro lu ma nem pi ro lu

Pesindhen's (singer) awareness towards *laras* is crucial need for them because it helps them to learn a song of *sindhenan* *gending* and to helps her to make *luk, wiled, gregel*, easily.

2. Special Sindhenan

Special *sindhenan* is *sindhenan* which used text (*cakepan*) or special song. The examples of special *sindhenan* are *Sindhenan Gending Sekar, Jineman*, and so on.

3. The Technique of Sindhenan

The important elements of technique *sindhenan* are the technique which related to technique *luk, wiled, gregel, angkatan, seleh and respiration technique*.

4. The Concept of Sindhenan

There are many concepts in *Sindhenan* so that if it is practice, it can be called as *nggendingi*. The concepts of *sindhenan* can be referred to *mungguh, ngledheki, lelewa, pas, ngenongi, nggandhul, selingan, and andhegan*. The simple explanation is shown below.

4.1. Mungguh

Karawitan Jawa is defined as a *garap* compatibility with its contexts. In *sindhenan*, this work is very important because with this *mungguh concept* the purpose of *penggarapan gendhing* will be gained totally. *Mungguh* is also linked with *gendhing* character and sound characters.

4.2. Ngledheki

Sindhen with their voice, they can attract their fans' attention. This attraction can be reach with some ways, one of them is manage *wiledan* appropriate with *gendhing* character that *disindheni*.

4.3. Lelawa

It is used to mention a sound character and way to sing a vocal sound either by man or woman. The special definition of *sindhenan* in *lelewa* concept is

related to sound character and the way how *sindhen* manage and sing a *sindhen* vocal. Being aware or not, *lelawa* has been existed in themselves (*Sindhen*).

4.4. *Pas*

Firstly, *Pas* is the last *seleh sindhenan* that has been coincided with the objective of *balungan seleh* (should be appropriate). Secondly, the meaning of *pas* in *sindhenan cengkok*, it is appropriate with *gending* character that *disindheni*. Thirdly, the meaning of *pas* in place is text placing which used based on normal condition, *wangsalan* is placed on position, *abon-abon* functioned as an interlude.

4.5. *Ngenongi*

Seleh sindhenan which is not coincided with *seleh tone* called *mleseti*. *Mleseti* is *seleh sindhenan* which its position is a bit in the behind of *seleh balungan* tone. Almost all types of *srambahan sindhenan* (general) always use this technique.

4.6. *Nggandhul*

Sindhenan which follows direction of song instrument (*rebab, kendhang, gender barung, bonang barung, balungan*). The exact meaning of the *nggandhul* tends to negative connotation because it refers to *pesindhen* who has low ability in *gending* and readin the notation. Although it has negative connotation, but the *nggandul* technique on certain case is needed by *pesindhen* when they sing a *gending*. The impact of *nggandhul sindhenan* is *sindhenan nglewer*.

4.7. *Selingan*

Selingan in *sindhenan* is usually used to call *garap gending* when *digarap mandhek*. In general, when *gending digarap mandhek* is always shown by *sindhenan ambegan (gawan gending/gawan cengkok)*. In general, *selingan andegan* is taken from *sekar macapat*. In the time when showing *selingan andhegan*, *pesindhen* has an opportunity to show her ability with managing *luk, wilet, and her gregel*. Therefore, in society, The Javanese *Karawitan Art* has difference in showing its technique when *sekar macapat* is shown as *waosan* and the function as *selingan andhegan*.

4.8. *Andhegan*

Andhegan/mandheg is understood as *sajian gending* which is worked as stop on certain place, but it has not finished but it is time to rest (*leren*). When *gending leren*, a *sindhenan* who follows the tone of *gamelan* is called as *andhegan*



Figure 2. *Sindhens'* performance

4.9. *Sebutan*

Nggendhing is understood as a *pesindhen's* interpretation toward *sajian gending* that can create the aesthetic quality of *gending* that they work on. In society, traditional *karawitan jawa*, *pesindhen* are called *Nggendhing* if their vocal are able to create their aesthetic quality of *gending*. Therefore, *pesindhen* who are categorized as *Nggendhing* are when they have all concepts of *sindhenan kasarira* or they have those concepts on themselves. The concept of *Nggendhing* is generally used to categorized *pengrawit* and vocalist, included *pesindhen* who have high art of virtuosity.

In the past, mostly *sindhen* can be called as single singer, especially when they work on *wayang kulit* or *wayang orang* performance. Nowadays, *sindhen* often performs more than three or even 10 people. The purpose is that the *wayang kulit* performance can be more attractive with beautiful women performance with their beautiful voice [10]. Moreover, the *sindhen* are often invited to have dialogue with *dalang* in *goro-goro* event. In this event, the *sindhen* usually also have a certain request from their audience or the host who held the event (*hajatan*), such as *macapatan* and *campursari* song.

The *sindhens'* position is beside *dalang* and they are in front of audience which aim to attract audience's attention not a certain philosophy meaning. When they sit beside in *dalang*, they will be disturbed by sound of *kepyek* and *peti* which played when *dalang* played *wayang*. It is also disturbed by the movement of *wayang fight* that is run by *dalang*. Based on observation, *ki dalang* often plays winner character of *wayang* with his right hand. Meanwhile, his left hand hold loser character and it throws toward left side of *dalang*. It can be imagined if one of *wayang* characters uncontrolled whipped on *sindhen* by *dalang*.

In the past of *wayang* performance, *sindhen* sat behind the *dalang*, especially behind of *gender* players and in front of *kendhang* players. Sometimes, *sindhen* sat alone and she (if she is only one) is *dalang's* wife or sometimes one of *pengrawit* in that event/performance. However, it is because of changing of era, especially in *Ki Narto Sabdho's* era which has many changes, *sindhen's* position is in front of the audience or toward the audience, especially in the right side of *dalang*, it is behind the *wayang* with more than two people.

In this modern era, *sindhen* are not only demanded to have high ability or expert on sing a song, but also they have to pay attention on their

appearance, with good and attractive dress or costume. *Sindhen* are often the "pepasren" (decorator) of a puppet show stage. If *Sindhen* are beautiful and young, the audience will feel more paying attention and enjoying the *wayang* performance. The development of *wayang* nowadays, even *sindhen* are not only dominated by women but have appeared several male *Sindhen* people who have melodious voices like women, but in their makeup, these *sindhen* still wear traditional Javanese clothes like other male composers and some time ago this male *sindhen* even become a trend for *dalang* to produce more value in their performances.

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