Lesson Ideas

Younger Students

Show your students a video of an Indonesian puppet show (wayang theatre). Select a gamelan piece of music that could accompany a short puppet show. Instruct students in groups of three or four to create their own two-dimensional puppets out of card stock and to create their own shadow puppet story line that will mesh with the gamelan song you have chosen. After the groups have had enough time to prepare, allow each group to perform for the rest of the class.

Teach the class about the scales used in gamelan: the siendro, a five-note scale, and the pêlog, a seven-note scale. Write an example of each of the scales’ notes on the board. Sing the notes to them and have them repeat after you. You can also teach them the notes’ names: for siendro they are “pannunggal, gulu, dada, lima and enam”; for pêlog the notes are named “bem, gulu, dhada, papat, lima, nem, barang.”

Visit the following site for an example of the notes and sound of each scale:
http://www.oddmusic.com/gallery/hang/hang_files/

Older Students

After the students have learned about the instruments gamelan musicians play and watched some videos, organize a game of charades. Write gamelan instrument names on scraps of paper. Encourage a student to come to the front of the class, draw an instrument name from a hat and pretend he is playing that particular instrument. The first student to guess which instrument he is acting out gets to act out the next instrument.

This website may be helpful for this activity:
http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/minisite/gamelan/about-gamelan/

According to the University of Lethbridge, gamelan from Java is “predictable and orderly,” whereas Balinese gamelan is “virtuosic with more fluctuations in dynamics and tempo.” With the class, listen to gamelan pieces from both Indonesian regions and discuss the similarities and differences between both styles. For a more advanced class you can discuss the cyclic structures of Javanese gamelan, such as the ketawang with 16 beats per cycle and the ladrang with 32 beats per cycle.
Listening Activity

After your students have had the chance to listen to some gamelan pieces, test whether they can recognize this style from other Indonesian music forms. Play gamelan songs interspersed among other styles such as tembang sunda, kroncong, kecak and modern pop. Ask the class to guess whether a song is a gamelan piece or not. Use the songs in the YouTube section for gamelan pieces. Here are some YouTube links for other Indonesian styles:

Tembang Sunda:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q21r39raqVY

Anklung Orchestra:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XKuvCzP_xr4

Kroncong:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyZmdWh3RYw

Kecak - a beautiful clip of the kecak “monkey chant” from the movie Baraka:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkxuPxdsZ58

Modern/Hip-hop - Kroncong Protocol performed by Bondan Prakoso
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzXov472XEw

Listening List

Udan Mas (Golden Rain), a well known Javanese gamelan song

The Madness of the Night and the Woven Stars by Feliz Anne R. Macahis - performance theatre that includes various gamelan instruments and voices

Pagodas, composed by Claude Debussy - the piece demonstrates how Debussy was inspired by gamelan music

Angklung Kebyar, a Balinese galimen song

Taruna Jaya, an example of the kotekan, a characteristic of Balinese gamelan where two musicians play interlocking rhythms

SambaSunda: Ecek - a modern gamelan fusion orchestra from Bandung, Indonesia

Kethroprakan SI, Myr: Ladrang Asmaradana

You can find free links to find this listening list on Youtube, plus itunes download links for resources in the listening list in the resources area for this unit.
Resource List

*The Virtual Javanese Gamelan* - Listen to, play and compose gamelan music
http://www.wcsmusic.org.uk/modulegamelan.asp

A comprehensive site that discusses gamelan music both from Bali and Java, describes the instruments and has sample recordings
http://www.seasite.niu.edu/Indonesian/budaya_bangsa/Gamelan/Main_Page/main_page.htm/

*National Geographic* article on gamelan music

A discussion on the influence of gamelan music on Claude Debussy
http://brenthugh.com/debnotes/gamelan.html

*Listening to Balinese Gamelan: A Beginner’s Guide*
http://cnx.org/content/m15795/latest/

A helpful slide show
http://classes.uleth.ca/200703/musi3721y/Power%20Point/Indonesia.ppt

Pictures of the gamelan instruments and a map of how they are arranged on the stage
http://cfsworldmusic.wikispaces.com/Indonesia--Gamelan

YouTube Links

The Southbank Centre offers several instructional YouTube videos on how to play some gamelan instruments
http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/minisite/gamelan/about-gamelan/

Some audio samples of SambaSunda, the modern gamelan fusion orchestra from Bandung, Indonesia
http://www.kapa-productions.com/sambasunda/music.htm

*Mission Impossible* theme song performed by Kuaetnika and featuring gamelan instruments
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1h5dcjRIQ-E

A gamelan gong kebyar, a modern style of gamelan music from Bali
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldPMifPbngc

A performance by community gamelan group Sekaa Gong Nila Kusuma
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STKBTRbRFq0

The Bandung Institute of Technology (Indonesia) choir sings *Gamelan*, a song that imitates the music style’s instruments.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-prEAmhqxw

A Javanese gamelan orchestra accompanied by singers
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_TKY1sf0

A mini documentary on wayang, traditional Javanese-Indonesian puppet theatre, featuring gamelan music
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfydro4X2t0

An exciting gamelan performance by Cudamani from Bali
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZExzpS6WK4

An excerpt from The Madness of the Night and the Woven Stars by Feliz Anne R. Macahis
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WmRhWfrP9A

Claude Debussy: Pagodas
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxDjLhy3aRk

Tabuh Kreasi Banyumas: Angklung Kebyar
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjBD1kaY4QQ

Putu Putrawan and Wayne Vitale: Taruna Jaya (an example of kotekan)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbCuEOXvu0E

Kethroprakan SI, Myr: Ladrang Asmaradana
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fth56Gd7_rw