

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research Topic Choice

In the late nineteenth century, Western composer began to have interest in the exoticism idea, including gamelan.¹ According to Artopium music dictionary, Exoticism means a genre of music in which the musical elements such as melodies, rhythm, or instrumentation are designed to evoke the atmosphere of far-off lands or ancient times.² To name a few, some notable composers who were interested in gamelan music included Claude Debussy, Lou Harrison, Steve Reich, Benjamin Britten, Philip Glass, and Evan Ziporyn.

Colin McPhee is known as the first composer who wrote about Balinese music in the realm of ethnomusicology. In 1931, with his long yearning to explore new sounds, he visited Bali for the first time.³ During his visit in Bali, McPhee explored the sound of gamelan. Influenced by those sounds, he composed Balinese Ceremonial Music and Toccata for Orchestra and Two Pianos. Other than composing, McPhee was also an active writer. Some of the articles and books he

¹ James Peter. Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude Victor. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*(New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2019).

² “Music Term: Exoticism,” Exoticism - Definition (Artopium's Music Dictionary), accessed April 21, 2020, <https://musicterms.artopium.com/e/Exoticism.htm>.

³ Carol J. Oja, “Colin McPhee: a Composer Turned Explorer,” *Tempo*, no. 148 (1984): pp. 2-7, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0040298200058216>

produced were *A Club of Small Men* (New York, 1948), *A House in Bali* (New York, 1964), and *Music in Bali* (New Haven, 1966).

In 1937, Colin McPhee finished his *Balinese Ceremonial Music* composition. Published by Schirmer in 1940, it consists of three movements: *Pemoengkah*, *Gambangan*, and *Taboeh Teloe*. In *Balinese Ceremonial Music*, Colin McPhee did not intend to merely use gamelan as a source of inspiration for his composition. Instead, he transcribed the traditional Balinese gamelan composition into Western keyboard music. He wrote the *Balinese Ceremonial Music* for piano duo. In this composition, Colin McPhee tried to imitate and illustrate the basic gamelan composition technique, gamelan tuning, and the basic gamelan instrumentation. Some elements which he uses in his compositions are interlocking technique and the gamelan pentatonic scale, based on *pelog*. Moreover, he also tried to imitate the Balinese gamelan instruments like *gangsa*, gong, and *trompong*.

Through qualitative method, this research aims to find out how Colin McPhee recreates the Balinese gamelan sounds through the format of piano duo. By viewing from both the Western music and traditional Balinese gamelan perspectives, I hope to comprehend what McPhee implies in his work, *Balinese Ceremonial Music*.

1.2 Research Questions

What does Colin McPhee imply through his composition, *Balinese Ceremonial Music*?

1.3 Research Objectives

This research will analyze and elaborate what Colin McPhee implies through his composition, *Balinese Ceremonial Music*.

1.4 Scope and Limitations

1. This research will use a score of Colin McPhee's Balinese Ceremonial Music, G. Schirmer edition, and published in 1940.
2. This research will use a recording, recorded in New York, 1941 and played by Colin McPhee and Benjamin Britten.

1.5 Significance of Research

Through this research, I hope I can give adequate knowledge and understanding to the academics, as well as pianists who are willing to comprehend more about Colin McPhee's composition, *Balinese Ceremonial Music*.