

## **Musical Conversations in Bali**

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The Institute of Indonesian Arts (Institute Sini Indonesia, ISI), located in Denpasar, Bali is the premier music school on the island, training all of the musicians who eventually travel worldwide as teachers, performers, composers, and most importantly, as cultural ambassadors. Each of these musicians comes from a different region, *desa* (village) and *banjar* (smaller unit within the village), and all have been playing for local Hindu temple and village ceremonies since childhood. In a system resembling that of the western music school, these students are partially selected on the basis of musical and social skills that will enable them to eventually position themselves within a global musical network. When they depart for Denpasar, however, they leave behind a rich pool of equally talented and skilled performers (their brothers, fathers, cousins, friends etc.), who continue to play, fulfilling their obligations to their families, *banjars*, temples, and villages. Over the last thirty years or so, a two-tiered system of musical training and performance has developed in Bali: one that trains “professional” musicians to enter a global (primarily western) musical arena, and the other that encourages and enables good, local Hindu practice. Each of these systems protects the other, allowing both to flourish simultaneously in a contemporary political climate that is often contradictory, even chaotic. This paper examines the tensions between village and city musical life, showing the ongoing dialectic that has become a part of Balinese discourses on music in the twenty-first century.