

Keroncong Music Reflects the Identity of Indonesia

Magdalia Alfian

ABSTRACT: *During the course of its history, “keroncong” which is an Indonesian music was popular during the 1970s and 1980s. However, in its development, “keroncong” music has changed and it gradually reflected the personality of Indonesia. But, the development of information technology in 1990s has an impact on the “keroncong” music and since it has made the “keroncong” less popular. There are some preservations towards the “keroncong” music. One of them is the effort from the young generation in performing “keroncong” music, which is by incorporating elements from other musical genres such as “Rock”, “Jazz”, and “Dangdut” (Malay orchestra music), so new terms of “Cong-Rock”, “Cong-Jezz”, and “Cong-Dut” began to appear. Finally, “keroncong” music, which is much older than the Republic of Indonesia (1945), has actually contributed to and an active role in the struggle for Indonesian independence and has also been translated into various international languages. “Keroncong” music has grown and evolved, showing the identity and personality of the Indonesian nation. That way, it is not an exaggeration if “keroncong” is proposed as a World Heritage.*

KEY WORDS: *“Keroncong” music, popular art, development and preservation, and Indonesian personality.*

INTRODUCTION

The current existence of the *keroncong* music in the society begins to be less and less acknowledged and, in fact, it has been threatened. During the course of its history, *keroncong* which is an Indonesian music was popular during the 1970s and 1980s and it was also a music which was used to lift the spirit of the fighters during Indonesia’s national struggle (Alfian, 2006). During the war of independence (1945-1950), the presence of the *keroncong* music was not only for entertainment but it was also used to encourage the national patriots to fight the invaders.

During that period, some lyrics of *keroncong* songs contain the values of patriotism, such as *Selendang Sutra* (silk shawl), *Melati di Tapal Batas*

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(jasmine in the border area), *Sepasang Mata Bola* (pair eyes), and *Selamat Datang Pahlawan Muda* (welcome the young hero). These patriotic songs which were composed by Ismail Marzuki, Kusbini, Maladi, and Mardjo Kahar received the attention and support of President Soekarno. This was proven by a radio star contest which was annually held by *Djawatan Radio* (radio service).

From the beginning of its development, *keroncong* music had been a musical hybrid, a genre resulting from a mixture of various elements such as from Portuguese, Arab, Africa, India, China, Betawi, and Java. According to Victor Ganap (2006), lecturer in Indonesian Arts Institute or ISI (*Institut Seni Indonesia*) in Yogyakarta, the influence of the Portuguese in the 16th century appeared on a song called *fado* which was derived from a Latin word which means "fate". *Fado* was quite popular among urban communities in Portuguese.

Fado was brought by the black slaves from Cape Verde in West Africa to Portuguese in the 15th century and it developed into an urban song and was played to accompany a Portuguese dance. The dance was influenced by the Islamic culture, from the Moors from North Africa, who entered and developed in Portuguese from the 7th century until the 12th century, and it was called *Moresco*. The *Moresco* dance which was brought by the Moor slaves became the entertainment of the elite in palaces in Portuguese (Ganap, 2006:93). The *Fado* that accompanied the *Moresco* dance was called *Moresco* song.

It is believed that the Portuguese *Moresco* song was first written in 1919, although there has not been any explanation yet about where the song notation was obtained (Ganap, 2006:93). Meanwhile, Kusbini (1981) said that the first time he knew a *Moresco* song was in the form of *Keroncong Asli* (original *keroncong*) in 1924 which was often sung in a contest at a night market, or an annual *Jaar Markt*, in Surabaya. Later he wrote the songs in 1933 in 28 bars, sung twice in *andante* tempo. It was different from the *Moresco* from Portuguese which were written in 16 bars and sung twice in *moderato con amore* tempo (Kusbini, 1981:21). Therefore, a *Moresco* song can be seen as an important link of the Portuguese influence on the *keroncong* music in Indonesia (Paramitha, 1977; and *Ensiklopedia Indonesia*, 1982).

KERONCONG OF TUGU AND KERONCONG OF KEMAYORAN

The presence of *keroncong* music in Indonesia can be traced from the arrival of the Portuguese in the early 16th century, when the Portuguese fleets under the command of Tome Pires stopped at Sunda Kelapa port,

during his voyage from Malacca to the Moluccas in search for spices. In 1511, the Portuguese managed to occupy Malacca and they managed to build the Famosa fortress which was built by Afonso de Albuquerque. Its strategic geographical position for voyages to the East attracted the attention of the Portuguese to come to Malacca (Ricklefs, 1992).

The first contact was followed by a friendship treaty in 1622 between Henrique Leme who represented the Portuguese and King Surawisesa of the Padjadjaran Kingdom in West Java. As a result, the Portuguese received a concession to build a *Loji* (warehouse of colonial trading company) at Sunda Kelapa; thus creating to a new residential area around the port which was inhabited by the *Mestizos*, who were the descendants of male Portuguese and local women.

According to M.C. Ricklefs (1992), around 1620's, VOC (*Vereneegde Oost-Indische Compagnie* or Dutch East India Company) displaced and expelled most of the inhabitants of the Banda Island who fought against the monopoly of the spice trade by VOC. As a result, these people were punished by being expelled and held in Batavia and some fled to the surrounding islands. In an attempt to escape to Malacca, a Portuguese ship carrying soldiers and their families who were of Banda origin was damaged and sank off Marunda coast. They were later arrested by VOC and expelled to an area which is currently known as the Tugu Village in Cilincing area in North Jakarta. They formed their own communities and sang Portuguese songs like *Moresco* and *Cafrinhoyang* which were accompanied with *waditra*, a small Portuguese guitar of their own creation (Ganap, 2006:94).

The *Keroncong* music in Indonesia began to grow along with the emergence of the *mardijker* group in Tugu Village. *Mardijkers* were communities of descendants of slaves from Goa (India), who were influenced by the Portuguese culture. As prisoners of the Dutch colonial government, the group was later freed and given a place to stay in the Tugu Village in 1661 by VOC Government, on the condition that they were converted to Protestantism from Catholic, so the habit of singing *Fado* songs needed to be adjusted to the way songs were sung in the Protestant Church (Dikbud Jakarta, 1986; and Ganap, 2011).

According to the writing of Dr. W. de Haan, the Portuguese sailors were believed to have landed at Tugu as those who carried a *keroncong* musical instrument, namely a small guitar or *ukulele*. At that time, the music was not called *keroncong* yet. Hence, W. de Haan also mentioned *Nina Bobo* (put to sleep) song as one example of songs brought by the Portuguese sailors and "passed" (given the Indonesian words). A writer Pedro de la Varda in "The Portuguese Influences in the Netherlands Indies" wrote the influences

of Portuguese music through two songs, namely: *Nina Bobo* and *Moresco* (cited in Paramitha, 1977; and Mintargo, 2007).

W. De Haan believed that the communities of the Tugu Village came from the Portuguese army in Malacca originating from Bengali and Coromandel (an area called *India Belakang* or India backside) who were captured by VOC and taken to Batavia in 1641. In Batavia, they were enslaved but later were released as the *mardjikers* after they were converted and became the follower of the Reformation church. According to a cultural observer of the Dutch East Indies such as Manusama and an Indonesia musicologist from the Netherlands, Surya Brata, these people were the Portuguese soldiers who came from Goa in India and posted on the Banda Island (cited in Paramitha, 1977; and Mintargo, 2007).

A Portuguese historian, Luis Filipe F. Thomaz Reis, said that the Portuguese army of Bengali and Tamil Keling (India) origin who were recruited in Malacca did not have loyalty to Portuguese. Most of them were traders who became soldiers because they were interested in the high payment. The Portuguese did not succeed in placing their influence and culture in Malacca, and the characteristics of the Portuguese soldiers there did not bear resemblance with the characteristics of the communities in Tugu Village. On the other hand, a Dutch historian of the 16th century, Jan Huyghen van Linsscote, said that the Goa people converted to Catholicism voluntarily and took pride in their Portuguese identity. Portuguese managed to make Goa as the "Rome of the East", recruiting the local population as the Portuguese army who were patriotic and familiar with music, in line with the characteristics of the communities in Tugu Village (cited in Ganap, 2006:94).

Through the community in Tugu Village, Portuguese music was spread to Batavia and created a genre which was called *Krontjong Toegoe*, which was the origin of Indonesian music. They made *waditra*, a small Portuguese guitar, in three types, called: *prounga*, *macina*, and *jietra*, which in Maluku was called *ukulele* which means "jumping fingers". By Tugu Village community, the name *ukulele* was later changed into *keroncong*, a term which is onomatopoeic according to "*crong*" sound it produces. The music played by the ensemble of the three types of *keroncong waditra* was also later called *keroncong* music.

During the era of the Dutch East Indies, *keroncong* music managed to survive due to its position as the *ars nova*, an egalitarian (non-religious) music for the Batavia community, which was different from the Western classical music and *gamelan* traditional music of the local people. *Keroncong* music expanded rapidly, favored by the ethnic communities from the

Netherlands who lived in the Bandan Village and imitated by the Indo-Dutch communities in Majoor Isaac de St. Martin (Kemajoran), or at Meester Cornelis (Jatinegara), in addition to being improvised by the Dutch army, who occupied barracks in Weltevreden (Ganap, 2006:95).

According to Yopi Tambayong (2000:74), the conclusion of a number of researchers of *keroncong* stated that the communities in Tugu were the descendants of the Portuguese community was incorrect. What correct is that they were the natives of Goa and Malacca who were enslaved and employed by the Portuguese and then released by the Dutch. They bore the names of their former Portuguese masters as their family names.

In the Tugu Village, *keroncong* music was born and developed. The communities played *keroncong* music at night on the crowds and tents were set up in front of the houses, and almost every social activity was always celebrated with *keroncong* music. The singers would sing the songs of the lyrics and often did not follow the rules of the music, so they would simply improvise/improvist (Harmunah, 1996:8). Until now, the people of Tugu Village have continued to play their typical *keroncong* music by singing songs in Portuguese like *Moresco*, *Prounga*, *Kafrinyu*, *Craddle Song*, and *Old Song*. These people have made their own musical instruments made of hibiscus wood and *kenanga* (cananga) wood. In addition, the tradition of drinking alcohol while playing music is also still practiced (*Sinar Harapan*, 9/9/1978).

The people of Tugu created *keroncong* with the musical instruments, namely: guitar, violin, bass, cello, flute, *ukulele*, which produced *crong ... crong ... crong ...* sound, so their music was called *keroncong* (Suharto, 1970; and Becker, 1975). Beside, *rasqueado* in Spanish as a synonym of the term *arpeggio* in playing *ukulele* is one proof of the origin of *keroncong* before it became the kind of music in the musical traditions which uses Western *waditra* solmisation which was much loved by the people in Java Island before World War II (1939-1945).

The people of Tugu developed *keroncong* music since 1661 until the beginning of the 19th century. In the beginning, the *keroncong* music was played by 3-4 people playing guitars and singing melancholies songs. Initially, there were 3 types of guitars, namely: (1) the large-sized *Frounga* guitar with 4 strings; (2) medium-sized *Monica* guitar with 4 strings; and (3) small-sized *Jitera* guitar with 5 strings. In its development, other musical instruments were added such as flute, tambourine, mandolin, cello, and drums. Tugu *Keroncong* used 2 pieces of *ukulele*, one with a single *kencrungan* and the other one with two *kencrungan*, in addition to the violin, cello, and bass.

Some *keroncong* bands from Tugu Village then combined it with the local music. Malay poems and Dutch songs started to use the melody of *keroncong* music. Traditional music bands from Tugu Village began to emerge. One of them was Tugu *Keroncong* band under the direction of Fernando Quiko which had 4-6 members. In each performance on stage, each of the players always wore a scarf wrapped around the neck.

Besides Tugu Village, Kemayoran was an area that immensely contributed to the *keroncong* music. Some famous *keroncong* musicians lived in Kemayoran Village such as Atingan, J. Dumas, Jan Schneider, Kramer, M. Sagi, Any Landow, and Ismail Marzuki. The term *de Krokodillen* (the crocodiles in *keroncong*) is likely to be originated from this place as well. These musicians from Kemayoran Village created a song entitled *Keroncong Kemayoran*.

From the notes made by Kusbini in 1935, the song *Keroncong Kemayoran* had some similarities with the Portuguese songs of the people in Tugu Village. The song was composed in 16 segments with the time signature of 4/4 and fast tempo (*Moderate Con Amor*) and sung twice. These characteristics are different from other *keroncong* songs in general at that time that consisted of 2 segments and it was not fast, allowing many twists (*cengkok*) in singing it. The difference between *Kemayoran Keroncong* and *Tugu Keroncong* lies in use of Malay language in the lyrics and the improvisation nature. Many *keroncong* musical bands were born in Kemayoran, such as *Orkes Keroncong* (*keroncong* orchestra) *Fadjar* (dawn), *Sinar Betawi* (Betawi light), *Sedjahtera* (prosperous), and *Titian Tjinta* (footbridge of love).

ORIGINAL KERONCONG

In its development, the *keroncong* music has changed and it gradually reflected the identity of Indonesia, especially after the occupation of Japanese (1942-1945). At that time, everything was banned anything that has the characteristics of the Western, including the field of singing. Through *Keimin Bunka Shidosho* (Japanese Cultural Center), its cultural institution, Japan tried to control and direct the development of music and singing towards the spirit of the Eastern world. Japan strongly encouraged the creation of songs that would evoke the spirit of work and foster patriotism. In 1943, Japan banned the *keroncong* music which was "romantic". Japan changed the face and appearance of the *keroncong* music into the one or a "polite and have moral". It was part of the Japanese propaganda in support of the Great East Asian War (1939-1945).

During the Japanese occupation, *keroncong* music was no longer closely

associated with dancing, parties, and drinking, which are generally more negative (Munjid, 2001). The habit of singing while going in and around the village or playing music on the streets while dancing and getting drunk was not found anymore. The rendition of *keroncong* music was also changed into a quieter rendition, without a lot of styles and the players would wear polite and formal dress such as *kebaya* (kind of woman's blouse the front of which is pinned together, usually worn with a sarong). In the development, Japan organized a variety of events such as *keroncong* night for charity and every day, *keroncong* music was played on the radio of Jakarta. At this time, the name of Gesang started to gain popularity (Sugiyanto, 2003).

In an interview recorded in the album *Tribute to Gesang* which was released by GNP in 2007, Gesang explained that the song of *Bengawan Solo* (Solo river) was made in a dry season in 1940 when he was sitting on the edge of *Bengawan Solo* river. Knowing that *Bengawan Solo* was dry in the dry season and had abundant water during the rainy season has inspired this *keroncong* maestro in composing the song. Humming while scribbling on a piece of a cigarette wrapper, he composed *Bengawan Solo* (Anggraini, 2012).

The song, then, has been translated into numerous languages and the Japanese society loved this song very much. "Through the *Bengawan Solo* song, the Japanese feel close to Indonesia. The Japanese society highly respects and loves Gesang", said Kojiro Shiojiri, Japan's Ambassador to Indonesia, who came to Gesang's home on the day of his funeral. "Until now, there is Gesang Foundation in Japan", he said (cited by *Reuters*, 22/5/2010).

The *keroncong* music increasingly showed its existence at the time of the Indonesian revolution of independence (1945-1950). At that time, the fighters occupied several radio stations and used them as a "weapon". Many patriotic songs were written in *keroncong* music and broadcast by the radio stations controlled by the fighters. Since then, *keroncong* music was no longer seen as a lower-class musical aspiration, but it has become a national aspiration. Songs which were written at that time were known as "revolution *keroncong*" which was associated with freedom and independence. One of the popular *keroncong* songs at that time was *Keroncong Merdeka* (freedom *keroncong*) whose lyric generally reflected nationalism and patriotism (Widjajadi, 2007:23).

During this revolution era, a lot of patriotic songs are composed with the purpose to uplift the fighting spirit and entertain the fighters on various fronts. The songs were created by composers like Ismail Marzuki, Kusbini, Maladi, Samsidi, and Mardjo Kahar who were very familiar with the

fighters, refugees, young men and women who had just returned from the battlefield. Some of patriotic songs were quite popular at that time, among others are *Sepasang Mata Bola* (double eyes) in 1946, *Melati di Tapal Batas* (jasmine in the border area) in 1947, *Bandung Selatan di Waktu Malam* (Southern Bandung in the night) in 1948, and *Selamat Datang Pahlawan Muda* (welcome the young hero) in 1949 (Dirjen Kebudayaan, 1978; and Alkatiri & Kamal, 2013).

Around the end of the 1950s, a revolutionary war veteran, Brigadier-General Rudi Pirngadi was very concerned with the existence of the *keroncong* music. The veteran who was known as the “*Keroncong General*” sought to create some new creations in *keroncong* music by combining it with the Western beat music and it resulted the “*Beat Keroncong*”. The efforts of the “*Keroncong General*” received the full support of President Soekarno, who wanted a national music which can be enjoyed by an international audience. “*Orkes Keroncong Tetap Segar*” (*keroncong* orchestra still fresh) which was led by Brigadier-General Rudi Pirngadi briefly appeared in the New York World’s Fair in the USA (United States of America) in 1964. Apparently, Brigadier-General Rudi Pirngadi’s effort did not last long since the beat *keroncong* did not have supporters in Indonesia (cited in Ganap, 2011:18-19).

However, the enrichment of *keroncong* music found success after Andjarani from Surakarta, Central Java, combined *keroncong* music with Javanese traditional music called *Langgam Jawa* or the Javanese style. The *Langgam Jawa* is a genre of music derived from the original *keroncong* with the rhythm from Java. The emergence of the Javanese style came from the Javanese *gending* (musical composition for *gamelan* orchestra in Java) which was accompanied by the *keroncong* musical instruments, for example the song of *Kembang Kacang* (peanut flower). This musical genre was derived from the rhythm of the original *keroncong*.

The rhythm from Java that was originally only *pelog* (seven-tone *gamelan* orchestra scale in Java) by a member of the *keroncong* group *Tjempaka Putih* (white frangipani), Andjarani was increased to *slendro* (five-tone tuning system of Javanese *gamelan* orchestra). The recording of songs of this style in 1966 was initiated by the *keroncong* band of *Tjempaka Putih* under the leadership of Slameto. This was the beginning of the development of the Javanese style with the addition of variation of *cello* or drumming, stroke technique or *interlocking*, and *cuk* or *ukulele* (Pasaribu, 1986). The presence of the style brings a great impact on the musicians and singers as well as the musical development of *keroncong* music (Sukanti, 2002:52).

The late 1960’s were golden years of songs with the Javanese style. One

of the songs was *Yen ing Tawang Ana Lintang* (there is star in the sky) which was composed by Andjarani which became a recording album which was sold well in the market. The rise of albums of songs with Javanese melody is due to the assumption that this new type of music attracts a lot of fans. Another factor is because these songs are in the Javanese language, so that they are suitable and easily accepted by the majority of the Javanese communities (Sukanti, 2002:51).

A lot of record producers have utilized and benefited from the popularity of *keroncong* music and the Javanese style. Likewise, the commodity in the form of *keroncong* music brought success and popularity of a number of nationally acclaimed *keroncong* artists such as Gesang, Waldjinah, Andjarani, Ismanto, and S. Dharmanto. A number of *keroncong* groups began to emerge and release their *keroncong* albums, such as *Bintang Surakarta* (Surakarta star), *ROS*, *Marko*, *Bunga Mawar* (rose flower), and *Cempaka Putih* (white frangipani).

In 1976, an organization of HAMKRI (*Himpunan Artis Musik Keroncong Republik Indonesia* or the Association of *Keroncong* Music Artists of Indonesian Republic) was established. This organization was a platform for all artists and musicians of *keroncong* music which was charitable in nature and had the purpose to assist and observe the progress of *keroncong* music. From then on, the changes and progress in *keroncong* music have been increasingly felt (Budiman, 1979:88-90).

During the era of President Soeharto (1966-1998), the *keroncong* music had a special place. In official state events, President Soeharto often invited *keroncong* music to the state palace, even songs of the ruling party at that time entitled "*Pohon Beringin*" (banyan tree) was popular. "This popularity made me invited by political party of GOLKAR (*Golongan Karya* or Functional Group) to campaign in a lot of regions in the 1971 General Election and in all the regions that I attended, the party won an absolute majority", recollected Mrs. Waldjinah (cited in *Tempo*, 1/4/2012). Presumably, it proved that the existence of *keroncong* in the 1970s was booming.

However, the development of information technology has an impact on *keroncong* music since it has made the *keroncong* less popular. The presence of a number of alternative forms of entertainment in the industry of Western culture (music and film) has caused the traditional music, including the *keroncong* music, which is increasingly pressured by the modern music (Boydon, 1986). The interest of the community in *keroncong* started to decrease. *Keroncong* is rarely broadcasted on television and radio and the recording industries turn their focus to other types of music that has a

higher commercial value (Anggraini, 2012).

PRESERVATION OF KERONCONG MUSIC

Despite the decreasing trend in the popularity of the *keroncong* music, it does not mean that this music of Indonesia will disappear. It is because *keroncong* music has loyal fans, although these fans are mostly made up of people who are already old. For example, a medical doctor, dr. R.H. (*Raden Haji* or haji nobleman) Soetomo, is very concerned about the existence of *keroncong*. Based on his love to this Indonesian music, dr. R.H. Soetomo founded the “Indonesian *Keroncong* Center” on December 5, 2009 as a center for those interested in *keroncong*. In the midst of his busy life as a doctor, R.H. Soetomo who is also a *keroncong* singer still set aside his time to preserve the *keroncong* music.

The “Indonesia *Keroncong* Center” has a program that aims to promote *keroncong* music such as to hold a contest to compose *keroncong* songs at the national level, to provide a death benefit / for *keroncong* musicians, to hold a music rehearsal in the community every other month, and to conduct practice and singing contest for children. In addition, this medical doctor who once served as the Head of HAMKRI (*Himpunan Artis Musik Keroncong Republik Indonesia* or the Association of *Keroncong* Music Artists of Indonesian Republic) had a dream to establish a *Keroncong* Museum (interview with Soetomo, 9/10/2012).

In addition, the preservation and development of *keroncong* music can also be seen from the effort of the young generation in performing *keroncong* music, which is by incorporating elements from other musical genres such as *Rock*, *Jazz*, and *Dangdut* (Malay orchestra), so new terms of *Cong-Rock*, *Cong-Jazz*, and *Cong-Dut* began to appear. Nevertheless, the weight of *keroncong* music is still dominant (Widjajadi, 2007:51).

A student of the ISI (*Institut Seni Indonesia* or Indonesian Arts Institute) in Yogyakarta, Kelik Rahmanto Desta, conducted research for his undergraduate thesis in 2010 about musical activities of “*Irama Tongkol Teduh Keroncong Band*”, a *keroncong* music group in Yogyakarta. The band which consisted of young people was originally a group of youth who were just happy to hang out together on *Tongkol* (tuna fish) Street in Minomartani, Yogyakarta. However, it was that get-together on the *Tongkol* Street that inspired and entertained them, so *Irama Tongkol Teduh Keroncong Band* was established in 2002 (Desta, 2010).

The purpose of the establishment were: (1) as a forum for the appreciation and creation of young people in *keroncong* music; (2) as a venue for socialization among members of the group; and (3) as

keroncong preservation efforts, especially by the youth. At their office, the young members of the *keroncong* band learn and exchange knowledge about *keroncong* music. Its members are given the freedom to develop themselves in *keroncong* music. They try to incorporate the youth style in *keroncong* music (Desta, 2010).

In an effort to preserve *keroncong*, they also held a pop *keroncong* concert while launching a *keroncong* album which targetted youth segment. The performance featured classical *keroncong* songs and songs created by the members themselves. The way they sang *keroncong* songs appeared to deviate from the standard. Through the video in which they played *keroncong* and which was uploaded in *Youtube*, they looked very dynamic and wore what country musicians usually wear, such as wearing jeans, a checkered shirt, and a hat. However, the video uploaded did not show the appearance of any female singers, so the existence of the female singers remained unknown.

In the meantime, *keroncong* music in Surakarta, Central Java, has shown some noticable development. The performances of *keroncong* music are held regularly in Surakarta (Dekanipa, 2008). There are some places which are often used to hold those performances, including Sriwedari Park in *Jalan* (street) Slamet Riyadi No.275, Penumping, Laweyan; Central Java Cultural Park/Surakarta Cultural Park which is located at *Jalan* Ir. Sutami No.57; Soedjadmoko Building at *Jalan* Slamet Riyadi; and the *Ngarsopuro* area in front of *Pura* (royal building) Mangkunegaran.

In order to commemorate the 2nd year of the passing of Gesang, *Keroncong* Music Festival was held in Sriwedari Park on 19-20 May 2012. The event was held from 20:00 to midnight and attended by quite a lot of people, not only from the older generation but there were also a lot of young people. The Sriwedari Park was full, so some of the audience were standing and some sitting on in front of the stage. This proved that the presence of music in Solo. On the right corner of the stage, there was a flower arrangement of sympathy from *Tugu Keroncong Band* of Jakarta containing expressions of "Congratulations and Successes for the Event for Commemorating the 2nd Year of the Passing of Gesang". Apparently, there has been good communication between *Tugu Keroncong* and the *keroncong* communities in Surakarta.

Ngarsopuro (royal building) was the venue of 2nd Solo International *Keroncong* Festival in September 2011, while the first Solo International *Keroncong* Festival was held in Surakarta Palace. When the festival was held for the first time, it was attended by *keroncong* groups such as: *Yayasan Warisan Johor* (Johor Heritage Foundation) from Malaysia and

from outside Surakarta such as *Harmony Chinese Music Group* of Bandung, *Canina* of Surabaya, *Cong-Rock* of Semarang, *Irama Bama* of Surabaya, *Rinonce* of Yogyakarta, *Bintang Remaja* of Pati, *Irama Pakuan* of Bogor, *Nadya Dewi* of Purbalingga, *KR 56* of Lampung, *Cyber* of Bandung, and *Merah-Putih* of Bandung.

The performances are most regularly held in Surakarta Cultural Park. Each month, the Cultural Park holds the performance of *keroncong* bands from Solo and its surrounding areas (Widjajadi & Sahid, 2000). Each performance is recorded in the form of VCD which is later cataloged and stored in the library of the Cultural Park as the event documentation.

The fact that there are a large number of *keroncong* groups in Surakarta does not automatically mean there are a lot of *keroncong* songs sold in cassettes/CDs/VCDs. Based on my observation on the cassette agents (stores) in the Ngapeman-Surakarta, almost all of the cassettes/CDs which are sold are those which were entirely produced in 1970s to 1980s. This means that during the period of 1980 to 2012, I can say that the production of *keroncong* music in the form of cassette/CD has been stopped. The music producers perhaps assume that *keroncong* music will not be able to compete with Western and Indonesian pop music (interviews with Pendi Hariyadi and Bambi, 25/12/2012).

One of the producers who had gained successes in *keroncong* music and became the most famous in the 1970's in Surakarta is *Lokananta*. However, this time, *Lokananta* is a poor condition, unable to compete with more modern record companies, and does not receive adequate attention from the government. As a record company who had its golden year, *Lokananta* has produced thousands of records in the form of cassette tapes. As a matter of fact, *Lokananta* stored some vital records of the speeches of President Soekarno.

Currently, *Lokananta* is making some effort for digitalization (reproduction) of song recordings it had produced. These songs are later available in the form CD (Compact Disc) and each will be sold for IDR 25,000 (twenty five thousand *Rupiah* Indonesia) or similar with USD 2.5 (two point five Dollars United States of America) per CD. Being equipped with a simple tool, *Lokananta* has successfully reproduced about 80% of its cassettes (in the form of tape) of approximately 5,000s tapes (interviews with Pendi Hariyadi and Bambi, 25/12/2012).

CONCLUSION

Judging from its development, *keroncong* music has proved the existence of its distinct characteristics from other musics. Although

initially *keroncong* was influenced by many different cultures, throughout the course of its history, *keroncong* music has demonstrated its existence, especially after receiving influence from Java and having a place in the hearts of the people of Indonesia. That way, the influence of Portuguese music in the 16th century in the form of *Moresco* can be considered as only a myth, which in Portuguese it is no longer found (Ganap, 2006:98).

Referring to the statements of Indonesian scholars such as Mardjuki (1971), Edi Sedyawati (1981), Umar Kayam (1981), and Desrilland (2002) that performing arts in Indonesia depart from a state where the art grows in different ethnicities, it will automatically give effect to the existence of *keroncong* music in the regions where *keroncong* music is alive and growing. The content of the dominant local culture in Java (especially Yogyakarta, Surakarta, and the surrounding regions) is affected and colored by the local traditional culture and pattern. The traditional musical culture is used to form a new flavor or taste in *keroncong* music.

Keroncong music, which is much older than the Republic of Indonesia (1945), has actual contributed to and an active role in the struggle for Indonesian independence and has also been translated into various international languages. *Keroncong* music has grown and evolved, showing the identity and personality of the Indonesian nation. That way, it is not an exaggerated if *keroncong* is proposed as a World Heritage.

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**Mrs. Waldjinh as one of the *keroncong* music maestro that was booming
in 1970s and 1980s in Indonesia**

(Source: www.google.com, 16/12/2012)

During the era of President Soeharto (1966-1998), the *keroncong* music had a special place. In official state events, President Soeharto often invited *keroncong* music to the state palace, even songs of the ruling party at that time entitled "*Pohon Beringin*" (banyan tree) was popular.