

## Applicant For Paid Sabbatical

### Application Information

Name: Bonnie Simoa Department/Division: Dance/Arts

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Years at Lane under contract: 17 (Since Fall 1999)

Previous paid sabbatical leave dates (if applicable): 2

# of terms of paid sabbatical leave awarded in the past: 2

Sabbatical Project Title: **Intangible Cultural Heritage: Legong and Beyond**

Term(s) requested for leave: Spring

Leave Location(s): Bali, Indonesia

### Applicant Statement:

**I have read the guidelines and criteria for sabbatical leave, and I understand them.** If accepted, I agree to complete the sabbatical project as described in my application as well as the written and oral reports. I understand that I will not be granted a sabbatical in the future if I do not follow these guidelines and complete the oral and written reports. (The committee recognizes that there may be minor changes to the timeline and your proposed plan.)

**Applicant signature:** Bonnie Simoa **Date:** 2/1/16

# Intangible Cultural Heritage: Legong and Beyond

## 1. INTENT and PLAN

This sabbatical proposal consists of travel to Bali, Indonesia to build on my knowledge and understanding of traditional Balinese dance. While my previous sabbatical in 2010 focused primarily on the embodiment and execution of the rare Legong Keraton Playon, this research focuses on the contextual placement of the dance in relation to its roots, the costume as a tool for transcendence, and the related Sanghyang Dedari trance-dance.

The 200 year-old Legong Keraton Playon has been the focus of my research, for which I have gained international recognition. Considered the epitome of femininity and grace, the dance is rarely performed, even in Bali. Its length and complexity intimidates the new generation of dancers who would rather learn shorter contemporary dances. Having successfully mastered the Legong choreography and technique, this sabbatical proposal describes in detail my plan to grow a larger context for understanding Legong dance through studying its roots in the Gambuh dance, the costume as a vehicle for transcendence, and the mystical Sanghyang Dedari “Legong Angel” trance dance which utilizes the costume and movements of the Legong. The Legong Keraton, Gambuh, and Sanghyang Dedari are included in the recently released UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list, which is described in more detail in section three.

My specific **goals** for the research are described below.

### **The Gambuh**

Legend has it that divine courtesan and goddesses danced the Legong in heaven. There is also a story that the Legong was born of a dream by the prince of Sukawati. In either case, the Legong movements originate from the oldest of the Balinese dance forms, the Gambuh. The scales and melodies of the Gambuh music also form the basis for Balinese gamelan music.

The Gambuh is a sacred dance that has existed since the prehistoric era of Hindu Bali. Like the Legong dances, it has spent time on the “endangered species” list. Thanks to devoted westerners who fund foundations to support the Gambuh, and Balinese scholars bent on preserving traditional forms, the Gambuh is now practiced and performed in specific areas in Bali. As of December of 2015, the Gambuh is one of nine dances added to UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

As a dancer, my understanding and knowledge is built on physical research. My goal is to become proficient in Gambuh movement, vocals and music. I Made Djimat, a revered Topeng (mask) dancer from Batuan, dedicates time and energy to preserving the Gambuh

with rehearsals and monthly performances in his village. His niece, Ni Wayan Sekarian, a master dancer, singer, and performer, has performed with the family group since her childhood. They will be my teachers for the three months I am there. Daily lessons in Gambuh will be the focus of my physical research.

In addition to physical research practice, I will attend temple performances of the Gambuh, conduct interviews with performers, and visit other organizations devoted keeping the Gambuh alive.

### **Legong Costume: Its role in Transcendence**

Bulantrisna Djelantik is a renowned Legong dancer who spent a decade of her adult life abroad living in Nevada City, California. Through my network of Balinese artists and the gift of the Internet, Bulantrisna and I met on Facebook. It was during our early conversations we discovered that in 2006 she performed the Legong Kutir at the Asian Celebration at Lane County Fairgrounds, just four short blocks from my house in Eugene! We also discovered we both studied the Legong in Bali with Sang Ayu Ketut Muklen. Bulantrisna was impressed with my work teaching and performing the Legong with LCC students, and asked me to submit a photo to use in her soon to be released book on the Legong.

In December 2015, at a beachside restaurant in Sanur, Bali, two LCC students and I met her in person. She gave me a signed copy of her book, *Tari Legong: Dari Kajian Lontar Ke Panggnung Masa Kini*. The photo I sent a year prior appears as the final photo in the section on “Legong Abroad.” In her book she recognizes my dedicated efforts to preserve the traditional Legong here at LCC, which is now shared in the larger community of dancers and scholars.

As Bulantrisna thumbed through the book commenting on various sections, I translated for the students. She paused on the section dedicated to costuming, where each piece of the intricate costume is described in detail. Bulantrisna talked about the *lemek*, which is a long front panel, made of gold painted cow leather, carved with lace-like designs and decorated with jewels and tiny mirrors. It is her belief the *lemek* serves as a vehicle to the spiritual realm.

When she said, “I believe the *lemek* is a bridge to transcendent spirit world,” my heart started to race. The importance of dance in Balinese Hindu spirituality initially inspired me to study this form. The altered state of consciousness in both dancers and viewers in Balinese dance is arousing. I wanted to know more, but Bulantrisna’s time was short and soon she was on her way to catch a plane home to Java.

Balinese dance costumes are stunning, elaborate, and a critical element in the dramatic storytelling. I know from experience that donning the costume and make-up, which takes upwards of 2 hours, is part of a spiritual preparation, and in itself is a kind of transformation. During this process of make-up and costuming, the dancer moves from daily life to embody an ancient character that weaves stories of a mystical world filled with unseen forces. With Bulantrisna’s book in hand, I was left with so many questions. What role does the costume play in the telling of these dance stories? How have they evolved and changed over time? What rituals and rites are associated with the costumes? My goal is to explore these questions more fully with artists and scholars in Bali, and gain a fuller understanding of the role the costume plays as a bridge to the spirit world.

### **Sanghyang Dedari: “Legong Angel” trance-dance**

The Sanghyang Dedari was also one of the nine Balinese dances added to UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list. The function of this sacred trance-dance is to protect the Balinese people against evil forces invoked by practitioners of black magic, or in cases of epidemics and natural disasters. Dancers are escorted into trance through the use of incense and voice. They are clothed in a simplified Legong costume, and the Legong-like crown is blessed and placed on the dancer’s head. Once in trance, the dancers are addressed as gods, and their vocalizations are considered healing powers to expel evil influences. The dreamlike dances are performed with closed eyes, and intricate movements from the Legong are danced, even though the dancers are not trained.

I first became interested in the Sanghyang Dedari after seeing Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson’s film *Trance and Dance in Bali*, and by reading *Dance and Drama in Bali* written in the early 30’s by dancer Beryl de Zoete and artist Walter Spies. However, I have been repeatedly disappointed by inauthentic and obviously staged tourist versions.

Fred B. Eisemen, author of *Bali: Sekala and Niskala* “Seen and Unseen” is not the only one to point out that although trance is not uncommon in Bali, it is not something the short-term visitor is likely to see. However, there are some regions where the Sanghyang Dedari performances are staged for local village audiences and are considered to be the most genuine. One of those places is Bangli.

In December of 2015, two Lane dancers and I performed the Legong Keraton Playon and the Kutir to live gamelan in a temple in Bangli for a cremation and tooth filing ceremony. The *Pedande* “high priest” in Bangli attended the performance, welcomed us in the *Griya* “holy house” and showed a deep interest in our dedication to the Legong. Through my commitment to preserving the traditional Legong, I earned his recognition and respect. Fortunately for me, Bangli is an area where the Sanghyang Dedari is still practiced and performed. Through this special and uncommon connection with the high priest; my network of scholars, artists and Balinese friends; coupled with my ability to dance the Legong and speak Indonesian, I am confident I will be able to explore the authentic version of the Sanghyang Dedari.

My goal for this aspect of the research is to better understand the Sanghyang Dedari and it’s relation to the Legong through observing the practice and preparation; interviewing the performers, priests, villagers and dance scholars; and by reading supporting literature.

My **research objectives** are:

- To embody the **Gambuh** movement, vocals, and gamelan music.
- To understand of the role of the **Legong costume** in the process of transcendence.
- To experience, and gain insight into the meaning and purpose of the **Sanghyang Dedari** trance dance as expressed by the priests, vocalists and dancers and its relation to the Legong.

The **Gambuh** research will focus on embodiment of the movement, vocals and music with Ni Wayan Sekarian and I Made Djimat, via the primary foundation in Bali dedicated to its

preservation, *Pondok Kodok*. As a result I will be able to perform another Intangible Cultural Heritage dance-the Gambuh, and will perform it in Bali and in Oregon when I return.

Researching the role of the **Legong costume** as a vehicle for transcendence will come in the form of conducting interviews with Legong dancers, costume makers, and scholars; and exploring existing literature. I will begin with interviews with Bulantrisna Djelantik. Interviews will also be conducted with I Wayan Dibia, author of *Balinese Dance, Drama and Music*; and dancers Sang Ayu Ketut Muklen-the last surviving Legong dancer of her generation, and revered Balinese dance teacher Ketut Arini. Visiting museums and university archives for historical costumes and exploring pertinent literature will support my research. This information will be collected and presented as a performance lecture and photo exhibit.

Researching the **Sanghyang Dedari** will begin by observing the preparation and practice of the dance, and continue via interviews with priests, vocalist, dancers and villagers in Bangli. During the trance invocation, songs are sung to impregnate the dancer with a sequence of imagery. This process leads to the descent of the celestial nymphs from the heavens into the bodies of the performers. I will study the vocal invocation and learn their meaning.

## Activities and Timeline

Preparation, before Spring 2017

- Translate from Indonesian to English select chapters in *Tari Legong* by Bulantrisna Djelantik
- Contact Bulantrisna Djelantik, I Wayan Dibia, and Ni Ketut Arini, Made Redha to arrange interviews
- Contact Made Djimat and Ni Sekarian to arrange Gambuh lessons

A Note About Calendars in Bali

Aside from the Gregorian calendar, the Balinese observe two completely different calendars, the pawukon calendar (a numeric calendar of 210 days per year) and the saka calendar, a lunar solar calendar. Every household consults a single calendar that integrates the three systems. There are good days, and not so good days, to do even seemingly ordinary things like getting a haircut, buying a motorbike, or starting dance lessons. I will adhere to the calendar advice as best I can, but this may shift my activities and timeline. In addition, the primary concern of Balinese Hindus is appeasing the Gods, which always takes precedence over any schedules and appointments. That said, the Balinese people are very efficient with time and always supportive of “outsiders” learning more about their culture. Below is a schedule of my activities and timeline.

### Week 1

Meet with Made Djimat and Ni Sekarian to schedule daily dance, voice, and gamelan lessons  
Visit Ni Ketut Arini in Denpasar, discuss research plan  
Visit Indonesian Institute of the Arts, Denpasar  
Plan and prepare interviews

**Week 2**

Read online journal research materials

Visit I Wayan Dibia in Denpasar, discuss research plan

Gambuh Lessons: 4 times per week, both dance (which included vocals) and gamelan

Schedule Interviews

**Week 3**

Meet Bulantrisna in Java, who has agreed to share her research archives for her book

Lessons with Bulantrisna in masked Legong

Return to Bali

Visit Pedande (priest) in Bangli, for Sanghyang Dedari

**Week 4**

Read online journal research materials

Gambuh Lessons: 4 times per week, both dance (which included vocals) and gamelan

Conduct Interviews

Museum Visit

Gambuh Performance

**Week 5**

Read online journal research materials

Gambuh Lessons: 4 times per week, both dance (which included vocals) and gamelan

Conduct Interviews

Sanghyang Dedari Performance

**Week 6**

Gambuh Lessons: 4 times per week, both dance (which included vocals) and gamelan

Conduct Interviews

Museum Visit

Transcribe interviews

**Week 7**

Gambuh Lessons: 4 times per week, both dance (which included vocals) and gamelan

Conduct Interviews

Visit Nusa Dua and Klungkung Gambuh troupes

**Week 8**

Gambuh Lessons: 4 times per week, both dance (which included vocals) and gamelan

Conduct Interviews

Museum Visit

Transcribe interviews

Gambuh Performance

**Week 9**

Gambuh Lessons: 4 times per week, both dance (which included vocals) and gamelan

Conduct Interviews

Sanghyang Dedari vocals  
Organize and summarize interviews

### **Week 10**

Gambuh Lessons: 4 times per week, both dance (which included vocals) and gamelan  
Conduct Interviews  
Organize and summarize interviews

### **Week 11**

Performance of Gambuh in Batuan and Bedulu, Bali  
Organize and summarize interviews  
Farewell visits (essential to Bali custom)

#### About Interviews

There are two separate topics for interviews. One is the role of costumes in transcendence, and two is Sanghyang Dedari trance dance. I will not know when the Sanghyang Dedari will be performed, but I have listed it during week five. All interviews will be voice recorded, and will be supported by either photos or videos.

#### Museum and University Visits

Museum visits will be interspersed into my schedule and will focus on dancers depicted in paintings, drawings, and photographs.

- Agung Rai Museum of Art, Pengosekan, Ubud.
- Antonio Blanco Museum, Ubud
- Indonesian Institute of the Arts, Denpasar

## **2. GROWTH**

My first sabbatical to Bali resulted in teaching LCC students the forty-minute Legong Keraton Playon. In response to the student's impressive dedication and commitment to learning about Balinese dance and culture, I created a Bali Study Abroad program. In June 2014, seven LCC dancers traveled to Bali. In addition to immersing into Balinese dance and culture, we performed the Legong Keraton Playon with live gamelan at the prestigious Bali Arts Festival to an audience of over 550 Indonesians. The national press, dance scholars, and Indonesian festivalgoers attended. The performance began with an introduction from the Governor of Bali and finished with accolades backstage from a community of Balinese dance figures for our efforts abroad to preserve this treasured form.

A year later we received an invitation by gamelan director, Doug Myers and former Bedulu village head, Wayan Nuaje, to perform for a special cremation ritual and tooth filing ceremony in Bangli. This opportunity resulted in bringing a second smaller group of LCC dancers to Bali in December 2015. For this performance, I decided to perform both the Legong Keraton Playon and another Legong dance, the Kutir. My teacher Sang Ayu Ketut Muklen told me traditionally this was the order of dances. Performing these two dances

unedited back-to-back has not happened in Bali in over 40 years, and dancing the Legong for an hour straight is unheard of now. But the opportunity was there, we had the desire and abilities, and it was the perfect occasion, and it was life changing. During my sabbatical in 2010, I had no idea the unfolding of future experiences would be so powerful and rich.

While dancing in Bangli to the gamelan in the dark, on the dirt, at a cremation ceremony for 70 villagers...an energy entered and lifted me. My sense of time and space shifted, and I experienced a different state of consciousness. This authentic experience of dance as integral to ritual was life changing, and opened a doorway for me to the *niskala* “unseen” world. This altered state is something the Balinese are completely familiar with. Their culture is defined by it. They value equally the tangible seen world and the mystical unseen world.

This next level of research exploring the roots and mystical elements of Legong dance fulfills my desire to explore the spiritual essence of ritual dance. The research reaches toward the mystical world, via the Legong dance, to abstract concepts and states of being that create an invisible energetic web of consciousness inherent to their culture. It builds on my experiences and supports my growth, moving beyond the movements of the dances to the less concrete, more abstract concepts of meaning and performance.

Opportunities and projects beyond my current field of view will surely emerge from this research, and I will grow and develop in new ways. My track record for embracing opportunities for learning, sharing new knowledge and skills with my students and communities, both local and international, is commendable.

This research will result in my teaching and performing the Gambuh, as well as presenting research findings in articles for journals NDEO, the Moment, and Contact Quarterly. Although not included in the scope of this project, this research will eventually lead to a film about the relationship between the Gambuh and the Legong.

This project is essentially about embodied learning, awareness, and embracing the unknown. My complete immersion into the Balinese culture will be transformative and will shift my perspectives. The Gambuh will be my physical anchor, while I learn about the costumes as a vehicle to the spiritual world, and the Sanghyang Dedari trance dance. When I return to my duties as a faculty member, I will carry with me new knowledge from direct experience that leads to inclusivity, curiosity, and tolerance.

### 3. RELEVANCE AND VALUE

On December 2, 2015, while I was in the final stages of preparing to take the second group of LCC dancers to Bali, UNESCO gathered for their convention in Nambia, Africa. The officials declared nine Balinese traditional dance forms as an “Intangible Cultural Heritage.” The dances are: Barong Ket, Tari Jaged Bambung, Legong Keraton, Wayang Wong, Gambuh, Topeng Sidhakarya, Baris Upacara, Tari Sanghyang Dedari, and Tari Rejang.

As described on the UNESCO website:

The intangible cultural heritage is transmitted from generation to generation, and is constantly recreated by communities and groups, in response to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their history. It provides people with a sense of identity and continuity, and promotes respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

The news of UNESCO's decision hit the media just as we arrived in Bali. I was proud to see two of the dances I have studied and taught students on that list: the Legong Keraton and the Tari Rejang. Also included are two of the dances included in this research proposal: Gambuh and Sanghyang Dedari. This news felt like a firm "nod" from UNESCO that my efforts are in the right place.

The central and city governments in Indonesia are now responsible to prepare for the preservation and development of traditional Balinese Dances. I willingly follow this lead in my efforts at home as a faculty member at LCC. My sincere and rigorous intellectual, physical, and spiritual efforts to promote respect for cultural diversity and human creativity through Balinese dance will ripple through our college community, to the larger communities, and the world. The focus of this sabbatical is not only relevant and valuable to the division/department, discipline, program, profession, and/or students, but is in line with UNESCO World Heritage values and relevant to the world.

#### 4. COLLEGE CORE VALUES AND STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

This sabbatical activity is relevant to the college core values and strategic directions in many ways, but my response will focus on the Core Value of diversity. The Relevance and Value response above can be applied to support the core value of diversity in addition to the ideas presented below.

My research in Bali has required me to leave my comfort zone and sink into a different culture, often times, in uncomfortable ways. This research experience will further strengthen my appreciation of, and value for, our differences in beliefs, values, and shared understandings. LCC has a host of students who go through a similar process of leaving their comfort zone; to move into an academic culture this is often vastly different from their own. My experience in Bali will expand my ability to understand and support our students as they move through their growing pains and grapple with their beliefs and assumptions.

Bali is world unto itself. The large volcano in the center of the island, Gunung Agung, is the reference point for north, even if you are on the north shore of the island. North is mountain ward. But I KNOW...north, is north. Not up as in elevation. But the Balinese orient to the mountain. To them, north is toward Gunung Agung, regardless of where you are. It requires tremendous curiosity and a suspension of "knowing" to move among a group of people whose very idea of direction challenges my "knowing." This exercise of suspending my "knowing" strengthens and breeds support and value for diversity, and not just tolerance, but celebration of cultural differences abroad and at home.

Bali adopted from India the Hindu caste system, which continues to shape their culture. Although the new generation is beginning to rebuke this social structure, it still has its hold in most parts of Bali. The system in many ways defines access to power and privilege. Birth order and gender create their own kind of familial stratifications. Male children are far more desirable, as land and wealth are transferred through the men. In typical families, the firstborn male child has particular privileges and rights the later children are denied. This would not seem fair based on my system of values and beliefs, but this is not my world/life, it is theirs.

These are just two examples of many personal experiences of growing tolerance for and respect of our differences. I know there will be more. As our student population at LCC continues to diversity to include international students whose customs and belief systems vastly differ from mine, I will be better able to meet them with curiosity, tolerance, and respect.

Lastly, I have successfully supporting students growth in diversity through travel to Bali. In preparation for the two trips to Bali with students, we talked extensively about their role as ambassadors of LCC. The students were required to uphold high standards of etiquette and behavior in respect for the culture they were entering. We forged new friendships, and we succeeded in illustrating the power of the arts to transcend language and cultural barriers, and created avenues of intercultural understanding and unity. During our time in Bali, we created an international bond, and shared mutual respect between the larger Lane community and the Balinese people in ways that continue to resonate across time and space. This experience has been an honor for us all. It is my intention to nurture and develop this connection through further research as outline in this proposal.

## 5. EVALUATION OF SUCCESS AND DISSEMINATION

As a dancer artist, the obvious vehicle to share my sabbatical is through performance. In addition to my sabbatical presentation during in-service, I will perform the Gambuh in the Blue Door Theatre in fall of 2017. I already have plans to perform the Gambuh at the Asian Celebration in February 2017, and at Central Oregon Community College Asian Celebration in April 2017.

The costume as a tool for transcendence research will be presented as a performance lecture and photo exhibit for the public, where I will also discuss the Sanghyang Dedari trance dance. This will take place late Fall, 2017.

I am a firm believer in taking sabbaticals. We all work so hard, and our passions and interest often take a back seat to the tasks at hand of helping students learn and grow. I will share my sabbatical experiences informally with my fellow faculty, staff, and administration when opportunities arise. Sharing what I gained from my sabbatical will hopefully inspire others to follow their call to explore their subjects of passionate interest.

## Intangible Cultural Heritage: Legong and Beyond

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## ADDITIONAL POINTS

Provided you have a minimum of 55 points on Part 3, up to 25 points will be added to your score on the following basis:

- 12 points if this would be your first term of sabbatical leave,
- 6 points if this would be your second term of sabbatical leave, or
- 3 points if this would be your third term of sabbatical leave
- AND one point for each year since hire as a contracted faculty member including this year if you have never taken a sabbatical OR one point for each year since your last sabbatical.

Please calculate your potential additional points below.	Your Points
Enter 12 points if this would be your first term of sabbatical leave, 6 for second, or 3 for third.	3
Enter one point for each year since hire as a contracted faculty member including this year if you have <u>never</u> taken a sabbatical OR one point for each year since your last sabbatical including this year.	6
<b>Total Points</b>	9
Total with limit – If the total is 25 or less, write your total here. If it is more than 25, enter 25 here. (25 is the maximum.)	9

The final selection will be based on attempting not to award too many sabbaticals within the same disciplines. (Please see 23.8.7.1 of the faculty contract for details.)

The decision of the Committee is final and is subject to appeal only on grounds specified by LCCEA Executive Board.

**PART 4: DIVISION DEAN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND COST ESTIMATE**

**Division Dean:**

Please sign below to acknowledge receipt of a copy of this application and provide an estimate of the cost for a replacement. Thank you.

Estimated replacement cost: Salary \$16,123 OPE \$6,126.74 Total \$ 22,249.74

Division Dean: Rick Simms

Ext. 5139

Signature: signature on attached page Date: \_\_\_\_\_