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The Act of Singing: Women, Music, and the Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in Indonesia

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Abstract (English/Indonesian)
In this article, I show how the Dialita women's choir uses music to contest the ongoing denial of state-sponsored violence that followed the Indonesian tragedy of 1965–66, particularly as it impacted women. More specifically, Dialita uses their experiences and positionalities as women to perform an alternative collective memory for younger generations of Indonesians. Composed in prison, Dialita's musical repertoire memorialises the affects and effects of imprisonment, exile, trauma, and survival. Due to government censure and public condemnation, the songs had been silenced by the Indonesian state and hidden underground from the public since the Indonesian tragedy. In the early 2000s, the women of Dialita formed a musical group and courageously began performing in public, collaborating with young musicians and recording the songs. I contend that women's collective singing is an act of critical remembrance, opening a new front in struggles for truth and reconciliation, especially when juridical appeals and strategies have been rebuffed.

Aksi Menyanyi: Perempuan, Musik, dan Politik Kebenaran, dan Rekonsiliasi di Indonesia
Dalam artikel ini, saya menunjukkan bagaimana paduan suara perempuan Dialita menggunakan musik untuk menentang penyangkalan berkelanjutan atas kekerasan yang didukung oleh negara setelah tragedi Indonesia 1965–66, khususnya yang berdampak pada perempuan. Lebih khusus lagi, Dialita menggunakan pengalaman dan posisi mereka sebagai perempuan untuk menampilkan memori kolektif alternatif bagi generasi muda Indonesia. Digubah di penjara, repertoar musik Dialita mengenang afek dan efek penjara, pengasingan, trauma, dan kebertahanan hidup. Karena kecaman pemerintah dan publik, lagu-lagu tersebut dibungkam oleh negara dan tersembunyi di luar

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Figure 1. Dialita, conducted by Martin Lampanguli and accompanied on keyboard by Leilani Hermiasih (a.k.a. Frau), performing in front of the Sukarno Banyan Tree at Sanata Dharma Catholic University in Yogyakarta, 1 October 2016 (photograph by Dwi Oblo).

pengetahuan publik. Pada awal 2000-an, para perempuan Dialita membentuk grup musik dan mulai berani tampil di depan umum, berkolaborasi dengan musisi muda dan merekam lagu-lagu mereka. Saya berpendapat bahwa nyanyian kolektif perempuan adalah aksi untuk mengingat secara kritis, membuka front baru dalam perjuangan untuk kebenaran dan rekonsiliasi, terutama setelah upaya banding secara yuridis ditolak.

On 1 October 2016, the Dialita women's choir performed a public concert to celebrate the release of their first album *Dunia Milik Kita* (The World Belongs to Us) (Figure 1). Framed by the majestic Sukarno banyan tree at Sanata Dharma Catholic University in Yogyakarta, the performance was imbued with symbols of Indonesian history, politics, and ideology.[1] 1 October 1965 marked the date that seven military officers, including six

[1] First president Sukarno presented the banyan tree to Sanata Dharma University in 1961. The banyan tree has roots in pre-colonial Javanese mythology, and grew into a symbol of the Indonesian ruling group Golkar (*Golongan Karya*) from 1971 to 1999 (which later became a political party, 1999–present). In post-Suharto

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generals, were kidnapped and killed in a botched coup d'état blamed by the army on the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, PKI).[2] In the ensuing six months, the army and affiliated groups and individuals systematically killed approximately 500,000 to one million people, and arrested some 1.5 million more, for their alleged ties to the PKI. Most of the suspected actors were never tried, but rounded up and put in jail.[3] In 1967, Indonesia's second president Suharto proclaimed 1 October a state holiday, "*Pancasila* Reverence Day" (*Hari Kesaktian Pancasila*), to commemorate the killings of the seven military officers. As an official state event, 1 October celebrates the sanctity of the Indonesian state ideology *Pancasila* and serves as a present-day reminder of the "latent threat of Communism."[4]

1 October was a symbolic marker for the launching of Dialita's first album. But their musical performance did not explicitly refer to the 1 October putsch, the Indonesian military, or Communism. Rather, their songs echoed the affects and effects of imprisonment, exile, trauma, and survival. As Dialita member Ibu Irina stated, "our stories are about families—families splitting apart, spending time in jail—and not about killing generals."[5] Composed in prison, the songs memorialised the women and men imprisoned without trial by the government for their alleged participation in the killing of the seven military officers being celebrated that day. In concert, the singers breathed life into songs they had modernised with a younger generation of contemporary musicians. They encouraged the audience to listen empathetically to the heretofore silenced voices of 1965 and to understand how political prisoners and their families continue to be affected by the Indonesian tragedy.[6]

Due to government censure and public condemnation, the songs performed by Dialita had been silenced by the Indonesian state and hidden underground since the mass

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Indonesia, the banyan tree became a rhizomatic symbol of domination as well as subversion for the independence movement in West Papua (Kirksey 2012:55–79).

[2] For information about what happened on the eve of 1 October 1965, see Anderson and McVey (1971) and Roosa (2006). On the mass killings in various parts of Indonesia, see Cribb ed. (1990); Kammen and McGregor (2012); Wardaya (2013); Chandra (2017); Hearman (2018); McGregor, Melvin, and Pohlman (2018); Melvin (2018); Robinson (1995, 2018); and Roosa (2020).

[3] Jails were located in various places on Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Bali, and Maluku (mainly the island of Buru) (Amnesty International 1977:18).

[4] "bahaya laten Komunis"; see CNN Indonesia (1 October 2019): https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20191001100724-20-435595/anies-peringati-kesaktian-pancasila-ancaman-komunis-nyata. Also, see (29 September 2020): https://republika.co.id/berita/qhfc5w380/gus-jazil-waspadai-bahaya-laten-komunis. On the persistence of the "discursive phantom of the Communist threat" after the New Order, see Heryanto (1999); see also Heryanto (2006). The five principles of the state ideology *Pancasila* are: a belief in one God, respect for human values, nationalism, democracy, and social justice.

[5] Dates for interviews cited are listed at the end of this article. All translations are provided by the author.

[6] In this article, "1965" encompasses "not only the mass violence of late 1965 and early 1966 but also the legacy of political imprisonment, purges, and suppression of the left, as well as the stigmatization of millions of ordinary citizens in political, social, and cultural life" (Zurbuchen 2002:565fn2). The Indonesian tragedy of 1965–66 refers to the mass killings of suspected Communists.

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killings of suspected Communists carried out by the army under the direction of then-Major General Suharto. These events laid the groundwork for Suharto's thirty-two-year reign as president during the "New Order" (*Orde Baru*). Although the New Order government had separated their families, taken away their full rights of citizenship, and portrayed them as savage and immoral, the women of Dialita sang about human rights, national belonging, and hope for national reconciliation: a "world [that] belongs to [all of] us."[7]

"Dialita," an acronym for "*Di A*tas *Li*ma Puluh *Ta*hun" ("More than fifty years old," as in the age of most of its members), is a grass-roots women's choir comprising (a) former political prisoners who were jailed because of their supposed involvement with the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, PKI); (b) family members of those killed or imprisoned; and (c) supporters, who use music to raise historical awareness about 1965. Two of the twenty-two members in the choir were imprisoned, and all of the members consider themselves survivors of the Indonesian tragedy, albeit in different ways. After the fall of Suharto in 1998, the former political prisoners in Dialita remembered, rewrote, and recorded songs composed by women in prison that had been buried for decades. Together with children of victims and supporters, they formed a musical group, and dedicated themselves to singing, and sharing songs and memories they associated with 1965. They began performing in public, collaborating with young musicians, and recording the songs on two CD albums.[8]

In this article, I show how post-conflict survivors of traumatic events use sound to contest the way that Indonesian history has been written, remembered, and felt.[9] Memory is crucial to this project because Dialita's entire repertoire of songs comes from women survivors who endured years of imprisonment in the New Order's jails. Decades after their release, they remembered the songs and taught them to others. Without memory, the songs would never have been made audible, and would never have contributed to the historical sound repertoire and archive of the nation.[10] To remember

[7] Having rights to/in a world has multiple meanings in the sense that Indonesia 1965 has been a global human rights issue since the 1980s (Zurbuchen 2002:568). Sponsors of Dialita include the Goethe-Institut, the British Council, and the Ford Foundation, among others. Dialita's remarkable story has been covered in international news media and in multiple languages.

[8] *Dunia Milik Kita* (2016) and Salam Harapan (2019). Both albums are available on Spotify, SoundCloud, and Amazon, among other sites, and some of Dialita's performances can be viewed on YouTube. I encourage readers to listen to the songs as they follow my analysis in the section "Sound Recording."

[9] Ethnomusicologists and musicologists have made a formidable contribution since the late 1990s to the study of music, violence, trauma, and reconciliation. I do not have space to summarise that scholarship here, but important texts on music and violence include Pettan (1998); Araujo (2006); McDonald (2009); Kartomi (2010); O'Connell and Castelo-Branco (2010); and Daughtry (2015). On music as a response to post-conflict trauma, see Ritter and Daughtry (2007); Cizmic (2012); Schwartz (2012); Pilzer (2012); and Fauser and Figueroa (2020). For studies of music and reconciliation, see Brinner (2009); Meintjes (2017); Ostashewski, Johnson, Marshal, and Paul (2020).

[10] Performance studies scholar Diana Taylor uses the terms "repertoire" and "archive" to refer to formal modes of storing and transmitting knowledge about the past (2003). The repertoire describes the process of storing and

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them is an act of reparation with an unsounded past that is still threatened with silencing by state commemorations, school history textbooks, museums, and civil society, more than twenty years after the fall of Suharto.

My approach focuses on sound as a crucial element of memory activism, or "the strategic commemoration of a contested past outside state channels to influence public debate and policy" (Gutman 2017:1–2; see also Holc 2018; and Rigney 2018). In this article, I show how the Dialita women's choir uses music to contest the ongoing denial of state-sponsored violence that followed the Indonesian tragedy of 1965–66, particularly as it impacted women. More specifically, Dialita uses their experiences and positionalities as women to perform an alternative collective memory for younger generations of Indonesians.[11] I emphasise singing as an act of critical remembrance, opening a new front in struggles for truth and reconciliation. I contend that sound was an important way of structuring women's historical experience and affective power within the restrictive conditions of the New Order's jails. The recreation, remediation, and redefinition of ex-political prisoners' music communicates those "structures of feeling" for a younger generation of Indonesians (Williams 1977). By grounding an ethnographic study of one group in the politics of memory, this article contributes to "the important but neglected role of sound in studies of memory activism" (Hofman 2021:160), particularly as it relates to women.

The fact that Dialita is a women's group focusing on the music of 1965 is significant in several ways. Women were singled out as targets of violence in 1965–66

transmitting "embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge" (Taylor 2003:20). The archive refers to written texts, photographs, videos, CDs, and other material objects supposedly resistant to change (ibid.:19). The archive and the repertoire are often constructed as oppositional (e.g., written/spoken; enduring/ephemeral; fixed/flexible; dominant/subordinated), but, in practice, as in the case of Dialita, they work in tandem and influence each other (ibid.:19–27).

[11] Research on collective memory "trace[s] the discourse, practices, and sites in which and through which the past is made present and meaningful—and at times the way that past is selectively enlisted to serve political and ideological agendas or strategically 'forgotten'" (Kidron 2016). Halbwach's work (1992[1925]) is widely considered the foundational text for the study of cultural or collective memory. I do not have the space to repeat this genealogy, but point to several overviews (Connerton 1989; Assman and Czaplicka 1995; Erll and Nunning 2008). For an excellent overview of music and the politics of memory, see Spinetti, Schoop, and Hofman (2021). Scholars of Indonesia have drawn from collective memory studies, particularly Marianne Hirsch's well-known concept of "postmemory," which describes "the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right" (Hirsch 2008:106–107; italics in original). Postmemory helps to understand how a younger generation of Indonesians who did not experience the violence themselves has become involved in human rights activism for survivors (McGregor 2013); highlights the experiences and memories of survivors as a performative process in legal proceedings, regardless of their outcome (Conroe 2017); and shows how sites of violence mobilise memories among survivors that can be shared with their children and others (Setiawan 2018). On some of the difficulties and challenges of researching memories of 1965 among survivors who have experienced trauma, see Hearman (2013).

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(Wieringa 2002; Dwyer 2004; Pohlman 2015; Sullivan 2020; McGregor, Dragojlovic, and Loney 2020). Shortly after the military officers' bodies were discovered, the Indonesian army created false reports about members of the Indonesian Women's Movement (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia*, or Gerwani) singing and dancing as they mutilated the army officers' genitals and gouged out their eyes. Government reports were distributed via national media as a way to gather public support for the destruction of the PKI and the demonisation of Gerwani (Wieringa 2002).[12] Wieringa notes that the destruction of Gerwani became the "central ideological underpinning of the New Order" (ibid.:318), which subsequently defined proper Indonesian womanhood as mothers, daughters, and wives subordinated to their sons, fathers, and husbands (Suryakusuma 1996). Gerwani served as the anti-category for defining Indonesian-ness, as Gerwani women were portrayed as primitive, God-less, and everything that a proper Indonesian woman was not (Wieringa 2002). The word "Gerwani" is still tainted with stigma in Indonesia (*Tempo* 2021). Dialita contributes to the historical record by documenting the songs and oral histories of women prisoners, some of whom were members of Gerwani. Dialita celebrates the work of Gerwani composers and transmit stories about their artistry and activism in prison. By performing and recording songs composed by women in the "PKI family," Dialita subverts the continuing gender ideology that portrays Gerwani women as violent counter-revolutionaries and sexual deviants in order to erase women on the left from history.[13]

It is also significant that Dialita consists of women who are more than fifty years old. Dialita sonically calls attention to the prominent role of women in Sukarno's Old Order, many of whom were imprisoned for their role as leftist political leaders who supported an active role for women in politics during the Old Order. Dialita's specifically nationalist orientation expresses the revolutionary spirit of Sukarno, despite their "non-political" orientation.[14] As several singers told me, Dialita appears to be a pleasant group of middle-aged mothers and grandmothers who get together to sing for fun every Sunday (like an "arisan ibu-ibu," or women's club).[15] Ethnomusicologist Ana Hofman uses the term "apolitical politics" to "theorise sensorial aspects of the experience of music and

[12] Gerwani was the women's organisation closest to Sukarno, especially during Guided Democracy (Wieringa 2002:125). Women were active in national politics in the fight for equal rights in marriage, education, wages, and land rights, as well as other women's issues, so there were political reasons to eliminate Gerwani (ibid.).

[13] Wieringa (2002:23fn1): "I use the term 'communist family' for both the PKI and its associated *ormas* (*organisasi masa*) (mass organizations): Gerwani (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia) (Indonesian Women's Movement), Pemuda Rakyat (People's Youth), SOBSI (Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia) (All Indonesian Labour Unions Federation), BTI (Barisan Tani Indonesia) (Indonesian Farmers' Front), Lekra (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat) (League of People's Culture) and HSI (Himpunan Sarjana Indonesia) (Indonesian Association of Scholars)."

[14] Similarly, women's organisations in the Old Order defined themselves as "non-political" (Wieringa 2002:98).

[15] Dialita member Ibu Nasti explained that the acronym "Dialita" suggests something humorous and cute, like the acronyms "jelita" (beautiful) from the phrase "jelang lima puluh tahun" (approaching fifty years old); or "lolita" (Lolita) from the phrase "lolos lima puluh tahun" (running away from being fifty years old), among others.

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sound that are usually dismissed as invisible, mundane or hidden, yet which are able to make a rupture or open a possibility for new forms of political belonging and identifications" (2020:304). Collective singing has a particularly significant role in expanding the conventional definition of politics, as demonstrated in Hofman's study of women's choirs in former Yugoslavia:

> [U]nlike other forms of memory activism, singing is presumed to be "soft activism" or even "apolitical" and therefore less threatening to those in power. But it is precisely as an apparently mundane and joyful activity that choral performing enables a powerful mobilization. The strong embodied and sensory experience of collective singing is able to build ad hoc collectivities on a spatial and temporal scale that have profound political potentials or may even challenge the traditional notions of politics and the political. (2021:161)

In the case of Dialita, pleasure as politics has a gendered dynamic because, as Ibu Uchikowati noted in 2019, "men have tended to tell their survivor stories with a lot of vitriol, describing the pain and torture they experienced, in high-pitched loud voices. Dialita, on the other hand, just sings and tells their stories calmly, while smiling and wearing nice dresses; that's why people are listening." Appearing apolitical is strategic for Dialita's politics, particularly in Indonesia, where public political protests are often shut down quickly (*cepat dihabiskan*). Singing and "telling stories calmly" is recognised as apolitical, which is precisely what enables Dialita's activism to become audible. As part of a particular historical moment in which legal efforts to achieve truth and reconciliation for victims of 1965 have been thwarted, Dialita embodies a new cultural strategy with women's collective singing playing a leading role. By comparing the styles of enacting men's and women's survivor stories, Ibu Uchikowati implies that the struggle for transitional justice necessitates new cultural strategies of building coalitions, social bonds, and unity. This is not to suggest that men's and women's roles are fixed, nor to devalue political strategies by both male and female survivors. Rather, this discourse about male and female approaches to 1965 emphasises the strategic role of women and the arts in contemporary struggles for human rights and national reconciliation.

In order to appear apolitical, members of Dialita do not use the Indonesian term for "activist" (*aktivis*) to refer to themselves. Dialita purposely refrains from discussing politics in public, and they do not accept invitations to perform at political party events. However, their self-identification as survivors signals a new politics of identity. They refuse to use the term for "victim" (*korban*) because of its connotation as weak, passive, and defeatist. Rather, they use a new word *penyintas* (survivor), a word that emerged around 2005, to emphasise their agency. By adopting the new term *penyintas*, Dialita performs a discursive shift from passive victims to active agents of historical change. This point resonates with Conroe's discussion: "one way in which *anak korban* [children of victims] have positioned themselves after 1965 (and particularly after the fall of Suharto) has been through a downplaying of the issue of the *content* of their knowledge in favor of what can be *done* with that knowledge and what types of authority/expertise they can claim from it"

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(Conroe 2018:200; italics in original).[16] This shift from the static nature of victim as opposed to the more active agency of survivor accompanies new claims to authority and ownership over representing 1965. As I will show, singing transforms the content of survivors' knowledge from narrative into action, and mobilises collective memories into authoritative claims for constructing alternative meanings about 1965.

In this article, I will address the following four questions, which are framed around the discourse, practices, and aspirations of Dialita:

- How are ex-political prisoners, families, supporters, and contemporary musicians using music of 1965 and its aftermath to "straighten out history" ("meluruskan sejarah")?[17]
- What are the local conditions and contexts of re-writing ("menuliskan kembali") these stories about the past through music and sound?
- What does it mean for Indonesians to hear the silenced songs of former political prisoners and survivors today?
- How can the music of Dialita be heard as part of Indonesian history, rather than as a symbol of divisive conflict between two sides marked by violence, horror, and terror?

The research for this article was conducted from 2018 to 2021.[18] In the summer of 2019, I attended Dialita rehearsals and performances in Indonesia, and conducted interviews (face-to-face and virtual; individual and group) with the women of Dialita, as well as composers, musicians, and other ex-political prisoners and family members affiliated with Dialita.

When women survivors began singing together, they did not have an organisation or articulated strategies in mind; rather, they described the group as grass-roots. As time progressed, Dialita developed a coherent framework for the group's formation, rationale, and goals. I have aligned their framework with five strategies, which I will call "panca-strategi" ("five strategies"), to reflect the organisational nature of Dialita. Although not the term they used, the women of Dialita agreed that the portmanteau effectively captures the spirit of their activities. I wish to emphasise the strategic place of culture in

[16] Some ex-political prisoners prefer the term *penyintas* to signify their role as active participants in politics of the left before 1965, rather than passive victims or sacrifices of history (Hearman 2009:30).

[17] A term used frequently in Indonesian debates about reconsidering the past, *Meluruskan Sejarah* (1987) is the title of a collection of essays by the journalist B.M. Diah, who founded the newspaper *Merdeka* (Freedom) in 1945.

[18] Research was sponsored by the Indonesian government and funded by AIFIS (American Indonesian Exchange Foundation). It was presented at conferences and talks in 2019 (ICTM) and 2020 (Midwest AAS); as well as Leiden University; the Department of Music, University of Pittsburgh; and the Department of Music, UC Berkeley, where I co-presented a version of the paper with members of Dialita (6 November 2020). I am grateful to the members of the Dialita choir; Hersri Setiawan; Ita Fatia Nadia; Agung Kurniawan; Leilani Hermiasih; and Venti Wijayanti for their participation in this research. I would like to thank Lee Tong Soon; Philip Yampolsky; Nancy Florida; Ken Setiawan; Shalini Ayyagari; Rizky Sasono; Hannah Standiford; and two anonymous reviewers for comments on earlier drafts of this article.

everyday struggles for national reconciliation, especially when political strategies have failed (Pohlman 2016; Kuddus 2017).[19] Therefore, it seems appropriate to use the label "panca-strategi," which blends the Sanskrit "panca" (five) and the Indonesianised form of an English word "strategi" (strategies). The combination of these two words suggests something jarringly fresh and playful (much like the name "Dialita"), and it explicitly resembles (and implicitly disturbs) the name of the masculinist national ideology "pancasila" (five tenets; guidelines), which women prisoners of 1965 had been accused of betraying.

I will present this case study of Dialita as a chronological narrative in five thematic parts to show distinct, yet overlapping, stages of the group's development: (1) Straightening out history (*meluruskan sejarah*), 1965–present; (2) Organising (*bergerak*), 1998–present; (3) Rewriting (*menuliskan kembali*), 2000–present; (4) Performing, 2006–present; and (5) Sound Recording (and publishing), 2016–present. This structure demonstrates how Dialita's memory activism evolved within specific social and historical conditions, in dialogue with other localised forms of political activism and changes in the national landscape of remembering 1965.

Straightening Out History

In the early morning hours of 1 October 1965, a group of low-ranking military officers kidnapped and subsequently killed seven army officers, including six generals, who were allegedly plotting a coup against then-president Sukarno. A military group calling itself the Thirtieth of September Movement (*Gerakan 30 September*, or G30S) claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and murders.[20] The army, under major general and future president Suharto, responded by blaming the murders on the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), which was, at the time, a legal party and the third largest Communist party in the world.[21]

The attacks on the PKI were brutal and sustained and encompassed physical torture as well as symbolic methods that portrayed PKI members and members of Gerwani as dangerous, immoral, and savage (Wieringa 2002). The images of Gerwani women can still be seen at the Sacred Pancasila Monument, opened in 1969, and the Museum of PKI Treason (*Museum Penghianatan PKI*), built in 1990 (McGregor 2007). These images, "written in stone," reinforce the New Order narrative about 1965 and restrict counter-

[19] I define strategy as a course of action for achieving specific objectives, rather than de Certeau's well-known articulation of strategies (and tactics) as cultural practices in everyday life (Certeau 1984).

[20] The sequence of events began in the evening of 30 September, but the killing of the officers took place on 1 October.

[21] In 1965, the PKI and related organisations counted over 27 million members (Mortimer 1974:366), about 25% of the entire population of 100 million citizens at the time.

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narratives of the dominant history. In addition, history books, films, and other media were part of a coordinated government campaign against those who had been killed or imprisoned. The New Order orchestrated a massive propaganda machine including the movie "The Treachery of G30S-PKI" (*Pengkhianatan G30 September*-PKI; dir. Noer, 1984) that was shown every 30 September in schools, government offices, and on national TV. It is the most-watched Indonesian film of all time (Sen and Hill 2006), and is still broadcast to large audiences on national television (Zhacky 2020). This film depicted communists as evil and immoral and the army and anti-communists as virtuous and heroic. The glorification of the army as heroes and the PKI as villains is one of the most effective propaganda jobs in fear and suppression in history. It has been called an act of "amnesia" because of the large-scale erasure of the facts for generations of Indonesians.[22]

The military regime not only decimated the Left, but it created a culture of fear. The specter of communism was raised whenever challenges to the government emerged. Due to severe anti-communist fervour, and the rumours and gossip surrounding those imprisoned or disappeared, the children of political prisoners suffered from their parents' alleged involvement ("terlibat") in the coup. Calling someone a communist was enough to incite terror as children of suspected actors (referred to as "PKI children," or "anak PKI") were stigmatised and subjected to daily discrimination. Dialita member Ibu Irina, whose father Njoto was a high-ranking leader of the Communist Party and a member of parliament, stated, "If a kid was naughty, the teacher would say 'don't act like a PKI child.' We were told not to speak about our family. Our identities were disallowed [*identitas gak boleh*]. We had to use our uncle's name on our identity cards. I didn't know I was Njoto's daughter until I was 19 years old." Even now the threat of being labelled "PKI" is part of the modern political discourse of a "latent PKI" threat, as referenced at the beginning of this article.

By 1980, most political prisoners had been returned to society ("dikembalikan ke masyarakat"), but neither they nor their family members were allowed to become government employees, public school teachers, or members of the military or police. Their ID cards were stamped "ET" for *Ex-Tapol*, or ex-political prisoner. In some cases, even their own family members resented them. Many children blamed their parents or grandparents for their own lack of education, lack of work, and for their poverty.

The state constructed a single hegemonic memory of 1965, one that lasted for thirty-two years, a uniform memory which has only recently been shattered. After Suharto's thirty-two-year reign was forcibly ended in 1998, the walls around the cover-up began to crumble. During the last two decades, historians have been emboldened to reconstruct the past, while recognising that the truth may never be told (Adam 2004; Roosa 2006; Robinson 2018). The collapse of the Suharto regime in 1998 opened up "new possibilities for seeing the past" (Zurbuchen 2005:4); and a "battle for history" itself (Van Klinken 2005). Emerging out of the rubble, numerous counter-narratives about the

[22] Public voices of dissent during the New Order were extremely rare, although not completely absent (Heryanto 2014:106).

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tragic events of 1965–66 appeared in literature (Hoadley 2005), theatre (Rachmadi 2005; Hatley 2006 and 2010; Lis 2018), music (Pitaloka and Pols 2021), dance (Larasati 2013), and new media, especially shorts and documentary films (Hatley 2010; and Heryanto 2014:74–105).[23] Survivors have published oral histories (Bustam 2008; Nadia 2008; Sukanta 2014; Marching 2017), poetry and short stories (Sukanta 2005), and memoirs (Toer 1995; Sujinah 2000; Setiawan 2003 and 2020; Wiwoho 2012; Aleida 2020; Tedjabayu 2020). Music has not been a focus of this literature, although it is clear that music was a central medium for the political left before 1965. Music as a form of expression and collectivity played an important and unique role in the lives of Indonesian political prisoners in the New Order's jails. For example, in the Salemba jail, where writer Putu Oka Sukanta spent ten years, "music was one of the only things we could hold on to" (pers. comm., 20 June 2019). In this article, I will demonstrate the role of contemporary music in educating Indonesians about this bloody chapter in history.[24]

Even though the New Order government was removed from power in 1998, the events associated with 1965 and the mass killings that followed are still shrouded in mystery, misinformation, and misunderstanding for most Indonesian citizens. Dialita's goal of "straightening out history" is central to current strategies of national reconciliation, which involves four steps (Leksana 2009): (1) truth-finding through education, awareness, dialogue, and inclusivity of multiple voices; (2) reintegration of victims into the national community of Indonesia; (3) elimination of stigmatisation; and (4) reform.[25] Reconciliation demands "that the Indonesian government right the wrongs of the past by acknowledging the truth of what happened to many of its citizens and bringing about justice for them" (Wahyuningroem 2018:335). However, none of the successive government administrations in Indonesia have acknowledged the fact that millions of its own citizens were massacred, imprisoned, and tortured.[26] There are no

[23] Pitaloka and Pols (2021) also address the group Dialita and focus more on the nature of trauma and healing for survivors.

[24] Another memory and sound project that emerged around the same time is the 2015 album *Prison Songs: Nyanyian yang Dibungkam* (subtitle lit. "Silenced Songs," produced by Bali Taman '65). The album contains six songs composed or sung by political prisoners in the Pekambingan prison in Bali (see Dwyer 2010 for more on Bali Taman '65). See also the work of the women's organisation KIPER in Yogyakarta (Pitaloka and Pols 2021); forthcoming recordings of Lekra songs by composer Mochtar Embut, produced by artist and activist Agung Setiawan (pers. comm., 4 March 2021); and YPKP's compilation of songs by ex-political prisoner Tuba bin Abdurahim (https://ypkp1965.org/blog/2018/04/01/2405/).

[25] See also *Tempo* (2016): http://en.tempo.co/read/766242/agus-widjojoreconciliation-of-1965-tragedy-for-national-interest.

[26] In 2012, the National Human Rights Commission of Indonesia published the results of a four-year investigation into these killings in several parts of the country and condemned the crackdown as a "crime against humanity" (Komnas HAM 2012). However, the government of Indonesia dismissed these findings, and it refuses to determine who was behind the killings (McGregor and Setiawan 2019:848). In 2015, the International People's Tribunal 1965 was established to end the impunity for the crimes against humanity committed in Indonesia in and after 1965 (Final Report of the IPT 1965, 20 July 2016; Wieringa, Melvin, and Pohlman 2019).

state monuments or national holidays dedicated to the Indonesian tragedy (Setiawan 2018). School history books continue to teach Suharto-era interpretations of history (Leksana 2009; Suwignyo 2014; Purwanta 2017). Public events to raise awareness leading to national reconciliation continue to be marked by fierce opposition and harassment (*Tempo*, 16 May 2016).

The stigmatisation against women former political prisoners and their families has endured, as Dialita member Ibu Utati recalled in a 2016 documentary film about the group:

> … we have to carry this burden by ourselves for our families and the progress of our children, so they can be freed from this stigma. Why do our children have to suffer? As a former rebel associated with G30S, it is dangerous. They [the Indonesian government] put this stigma on us. It is painful to remember. We all got hurt. Dialita helps us heal those wounds.[27]

Ibu Utati underscores the role of women in "carrying this burden by ourselves" for children and families. Ibu Utati's statement points to the lack of progress on truth and reconciliation, despite the overwhelming evidence provided by several truth-finding commissions (see fn25). But that does not mean that people are not actively mobilising memories of the past to help heal those wounds and achieve justice outside the state judicial system.

Hersri Setiawan, a writer and member of the PKI-affiliated Institute of People's Culture (*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat*, LEKRA), who spent nine years in detention, has written about artistic activities in the Buru forced labour camp as the "Indonesian art of exile within Indonesia itself" (Hersri [Setiawan] 1995:19).[28] Following Hersri, I wish to address the music of exile within Indonesia itself as an important yet excluded part of Indonesian cultural history. In music, the "biography of the nation" (ibid.) has largely excluded composers, musicians, and songs associated with the left, which was decimated by the New Order.[29] The musical biography of the nation encompasses not only the silenced histories of exiled music in the detention camps, but also the recent sonic interpretations produced by survivors, family members, and contemporary musical collaborators. As part of a larger network of survivors, activists, and artists, Dialita aims to return a hidden chapter of history, to correct the historical record, and to create new meanings about 1965, as I will describe in the following sections.

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[27] Interview with Ibu Utati, c. 14'10" in "Bangkit dari Senyap" ["Rising from Silence"], dir. Shalahuddin Siregar (2016). See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XlbMDyb8hB8. See also Wieringa and Nursyahbani Katjasungkana (2018:168–186).

[28] The Buru forced labour camp was located on the remote island of Buru in the Maluku islands, and is infamous for its brutal treatment of prisoners (Setiawan 2020).

[29] Exceptions include Notosudirdjo (2001) and Yuliantri (2012).

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Organising

Dialita's formation is rooted in the politics, protests, and activism of the mid- to late 1990s in Indonesia. The fall of Suharto in 1998 and the ensuing years of reform (*Reformasi*) established the conditions that would enable the women of Dialita, among other survivors of 1965, to gather publicly to share memories, stories, and songs. With the help of human rights organisations, activists, and women's rights groups, survivors were encouraged to work through their trauma and to speak out about their experiences in prison.[30] In the post-Suharto period of reform, survivors felt newly emboldened to "move around" (*bergerak*) in public. For children whose families were torn apart by the violence of 1965, gatherings were opportunities to organise. Ibu Irina recounted that, "for the first time, we finally had the freedom to meet, talk, and form community organizations." Steps towards national reconciliation and justice were taken in the early years of Reformasi, when president and former head of the religious organisation Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Abdurachman Wahid acknowledged the role of NU in the mass killings of communists. He offered a public apology and recommended further investigation into the matter (Fealy and McGregor 2010). But due to government opposition and public hostility towards reconciliation, the matter was soon dropped; Wahid was impeached as president in 2001.

In the early 2000s, women of Dialita began getting together at informal gatherings to help the survivors and ex-prisoners who were suffering from trauma. Ibu Irina explained:

> The children of political prisoners were stigmatized by people and the government. They couldn't go to school. They couldn't work. They were "made poor" (*miskin turunan*) by their circumstances. So they needed an organization to help them. We invited them to gather, asked them about their lives, and organized training in farming or cooking, and gave them the tools and resources they needed.

Many survivors were afraid of being outed in public because they associated public gatherings with danger. Ibu Utati explained, "It's not easy to convince women to come forward. Most of them still want to hide their identities. Even if they wanted to bring back those memories and feelings, their family members forbid them from doing so. They aren't allowed." By visiting victims and families, the women of Dialita served as exemplary cadres in solidarity, mirroring the ideas and practices of women's socialist organisations of the 1950s and early 1960s.

The act of singing together informally with other survivors was a healing experience. Dialita member Ibu Elly Runturambi, who was a student and member of

[30] Some of the national organisations include the National Commission for Human Rights (*Komnas HAM*); the Institute for the Protection of Witnesses and Victims (*Lembaga Perlindungan Saksi dan Korban*); and the National Commission against Violence toward Women (*Komnas Perempuan*).

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the Communist Party-affiliated United Movement of Indonesian Students (*Consentrasi Gerakan Mahasiswa Indonesia*, or CGMI), noted that singing, both before and after 1965, felt different for people whose families had been destroyed:

> Before 1965, I sang patriotic songs with passion and without worry (*tanpa beban*). We imagined a bright future full of justice and prosperity, like the messages encoded in songs like "Resopim" [Revolution, Socialism, and National Leadership] "Nasakom Bersatu" [Nationalism, Religion, and Communism Unite!] and "The Internasionale," among others. But after 1965, everything changed. We weren't free to sing the songs we had enjoyed so much growing up. The only community that helped me heal the trauma was Dialita, which we refer to as "a family [created by] history" (*keluarga dalam sejarah*, KDS). We cried when we sang those songs because they reminded us of the past. And we sang them dreaming about a better future." (pers. comm., 12 March 2021)

The act of singing brought women survivors together to help each other work through the trauma they had been carrying for decades. The songs lifted their burden, and returned the hope and optimism that they had felt as teenage girls in the early 1960s. Ibu Elly remembered those Sukarno-era songs as expressing a revolutionary spirit, and a modern political vision that encouraged people to imagine a national community for Indonesians based on ideals of social justice and unity. The historical events surrounding 1965 created the conditions for a new kind of "family created by history." The act of singing a repertoire of songs that belong to a time of political possibility inspired women to share their memories and restore a sense of hope. The act of repurposing those Sukarno-era songs enabled them to imagine a more just and prosperous future.

Dialita's song repertoire and style of choral singing (*paduan suara*) is inspired by the many socialist choral music groups of the 1950s. Dialita includes several members of the Gembira Choir (1954–1965), which was established in Jakarta by students who had attended the World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin in 1951 (Yuliantri 2012). Participation in one of the many choirs symbolised nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and modernity, and not necessarily a particular political position. In a description of the activities and significance of the Gembira Choir, Yuliantri points out that choral music was a privileged medium for LEKRA, the PKI-affiliated cultural organisation, especially during the period of Guided Democracy (1957–1965). Gembira performed at receptions for foreign guests of socialist countries at the Presidential Palace so many times that they were given the nickname "Palace Chorus" (ibid.:448). They performed at events organised by the PKI or LEKRA as well as state events to welcome foreign dignitaries and during the period of Confrontation with Malaysia (*Konfrontasi*) (Yuliantri 2012; Farram 2014; Mohammed 2016:314). The Gembira Choir was not a political organisation, but it only became political through its alignment with Sukarno and LEKRA. Due to its leftist associations, the Gembira Choir was forced to disband on 1 October 1965 (Yuliantri 2012:449). As a way of documenting the songs, and teaching them to others, the members of Dialita began notating the songs from memory, as described in the next section.

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Rewriting

As they began gathering and singing with fellow survivors, the women of Dialita discovered many songs that had been composed in prison. Ibu Utati re-wrote three songs that she had composed in prison, as well as others that she remembers singing. As a child, Ibu Utati had learned gamelan music and dance, and she pursued these artistic activities as a member of *Pemuda Rakyat*, the youth wing of the PKI, which was banned in 1965. Ibu Utati was captured in 1967 and imprisoned for eleven years. Ibu Uchikowati, who was thirteen years old when her father, D.A. Santosa, the regent (*Bupati*) of Cilacap and a prominent nation-builder, was kidnapped by the army. She encouraged Ibu Utati to write out the lyrics and cipher notation for all the songs she could remember. Ibu Uchikowati reflected, "it was a documentation project. We thought: 'Who knows, maybe at some point in the future, a youngster will encounter this notation and make some sounds out of it'." She referred to this collection of songs as an archive (*arsip*), which contained about thirty songs in 2019.

The collection, rewriting, and publishing of songs is significant because documents, books, and family photographs belonging to members of leftist organisations and suspected sympathisers were destroyed after October 1965. On this point, I quote Wieringa at length (Wieringa 2002:21):

> After October 1965, institutes, offices, schools belonging to the PKI or any organization belonging to the "communist family," as well as the private homes of members of those organizations (and of suspected sympathizers), were ransacked and pillaged and all documents, books, periodicals and newspapers were seized and destroyed. All the publications ever issued by any of these organizations were banned and removed from public libraries, government offices, educational institutes and bookshops. Individuals had to remove this material from their personal collections under penalty of being branded a suspected communist (which made the person liable to be persecuted). By the middle of 1966, virtually all documentary sources that had a communist "taint," even speeches of Sukarno and publications of the left-wing of the PNI, had been destroyed. Fiction and literary works by leftist authors such as Pramudya Ananta Tur (who would later be sent to the concentration camp on Buru) were also banned. Consequently, documentary sources about Gerwani were very hard to come by in Indonesia itself.

In this context, "returning [the songs] to writing" takes on heightened significance beyond the practical function of cipher notation used to teach the songs. As part of the rewriting process, the group gathered information about the songs, and published the information as liner notes on two CDs. Liner notes contextualise the songs according to historical time (pre-prison/during prison; year), composer; social conditions of composition and singing (e.g., which prison; when they were sung); and meaning for prisoners. For example, Figure 2a and Figure 2b show Ibu Utati Koesalah Toer's handwritten text, cipher notation, and notes for "Relakan" (Let it Go). Ibu Utati recounted the conditions under

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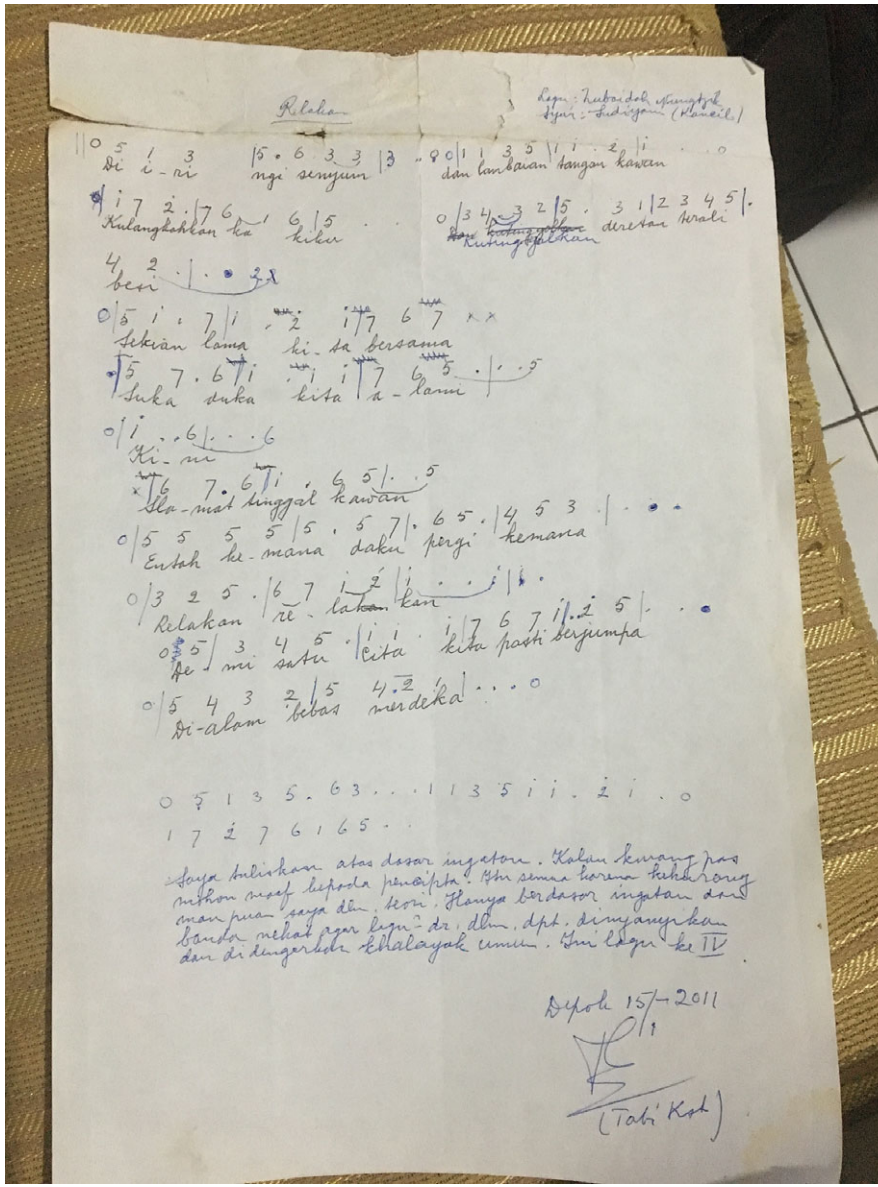

Figure 2a. Ibu Utati Koesalah Toer's handwritten lyrics, cipher notation, and notes for "Relakan"; melody (*lagu*) by Zubaedah Nungtjik A.R. and text (*syair*) by Sudiyami (nicknamed "kancil" [deer] because she walked quickly).

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Indonesian	English Translation
Diiringi senyum dan lambaian tangan kawan	Accompanied by smiles and the waving hands of my friends
Kulangkahkan kakiku	I move my feet forward
[Dan] kutinggalkan deretan terali besi.	[And] leave the row of iron bars.
Sekian lama kita bersama	How long we've been together
Suka-duka kita alami	Experienced joy and sorrow
Kini s'lamat tinggal kawan	Goodbye for now, my friends
Entah ke mana daku pergi, ke mana	I don't know where I'm going, where
Relakan, relakan.	Let it go, let it go.
Demi satu cita kita pasti berjumpa	For the sake of our shared goal, we will surely meet again
Di alam bebas merdeka.	In the realm of the free.

Saya tuliskan atas dasar ingatan. Kalau kurang pas mohon maaf kepada pencipta. Itu semua karena kekurang mampuan saya dlm teori. Hanya berdasar ingatan dan banda nekat agar lagu2 dr dlm dpt dinyanyikan dan didengarkan khalayak umum. Ini lagu ke IV. Depok 15/1-2011.

I wrote this from memory. If it is incorrect, I ask forgiveness from the songwriter. That is all due to my lack of theoretical knowledge about music. This is based on memory and the desire for the songs from inside [Bukit Duri prison] to be sung and heard by the public. This is the fourth song [written from memory]. Depok, 15 January 2011.

Figure 2b. Lyrics and notes for "Relakan" with translations by the author.

which the song was composed and performed. Sudiyami, a teacher and political prisoner in the Bukit Duri prison, composed the poem before she was relocated along with other prisoners to a different prison. Not knowing where she was being taken, Sudiyami left behind the poem and Zubaedah Nungtjik A.R. set it to a melody. A group of remaining prisoners, including Ibu Utati, hid behind a vent inside the prison building as they watched Sudiyami being taken away. It was then sung every time a group of prisoners was relocated.

In prison, music was a way to normalise the harsh conditions of isolation, depression, and violence.[31] In an interview with members of Dialita, Ibu Irina explained:

> When they were captured, these women were very young, some as young as 14 years old (she points to choir member Ibu Mudjiati, who was only 17 years old when she was imprisoned.) They were separated from their families, who had not been informed about their whereabouts. They were mistreated and suffered from depression. Gerwani women were skilled activists who used music to give women prisoners hope and strength. Music helped them relieve their stress and suffering, and prevented them from going insane (*sakit jiwa*).

[31] The lyrics do not directly reflect the highly sexualised violence against girls and women in prison (Pohlman 2015).

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In the prison camps, women composed new songs, and taught them to others. But they had to hide the songs from the prison administrators. Ibu Utati stated, "there were many prisoners who composed songs and hid them. And there are many who composed them, who still haven't told anyone." They were allowed to sing as a group only on birthdays, national day celebrations, and for religious purposes.[32] Under these conditions, music gave prisoners the strength to carry on.[33]

Songwriters had to be careful about inserting certain words into their songs (such as the word "red"), and songs associated with Communism or the PKI were forbidden (e.g., "Nasakom Bersatu"). Poet Putu Oka Sukanta reiterated this point: "All the songs I composed in prison definitely had feelings of anger (*kemarahan*) entwined with feelings of longing for our families and our lives before prison. Songs composed by prisoners had an element of protest, but it wasn't realized. We had to use metaphors to protect ourselves" (pers. comm., 20 June 2019).

Dialita's repertoire of memories in song includes songs associated with the political Left before 1965, and songs composed in prison. The songs composed before 1965 were considered compulsory songs (*lagu wajib*) that were sung in schools and official national events in the 1950s and 1960s. These songs unified the nation in sound through the "echoed physical realization of the imagined community" ("unisonance"; see Anderson 2006[1983]:145). They often emphasised Indonesia's relationships with non-aligned countries in the global south. For example, "Asia Afrika Bersatu" (Asia and Africa Unite, comp. Sudharnoto, 1955) is about the unification of Asian and African countries as a neutral third force during the Cold War; "Padi Untuk India" (Rice for India, comp. A. Alie, 1946) sounded a new socio-political alignment between Indonesia and India; "Viva GANEFO" (Long Live GANEFO, comp. Asmono Martodipoero, 1963) celebrates GANEFO, the Games of New Emerging Forces in 1963; "Nasakom Bersatu" (Nasionalism, Religion, and Communism Unite," comp. Subroto K. Atmodjo, 1965) was a Sukarnoist slogan to bring the three main ideological streams in Indonesian politics together in 1965. They are referred to as revolutionary songs because of their association with anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, and independence. Some of these songs associated with the left still cannot be performed in public, for example, "Nasakom Bersatu," due to the syllable "kom" [short for Communist] in the title.

In addition to nationalist songs, Dialita's repertoire consists of songs composed in prison, mostly by women.[34] The songs do not directly address the tragic events of 1965; the violence of being captured; the massive numbers of people killed; or the torture that they endured in prison. Rather, they communicate hope for the future through personal experiences, feelings, and emotions. Ibu Utati explained, "The songs are all about

[32] Men in the Buru prison were not allowed to sing choral music (Setiawan 1995:7). For more about music and theatre performed in the New Order's jails, see Rachmadi (2005); RUAS (2006); and Tedjabayu (2020).

[33] Compare Pilzer's work on the music of Korean women in the Japanese "comfort women" system (2012).

[34] Dialita has only recorded one prison song composed by a male composer ("Kupandang Langit"), but there are many songs that have not yet been recorded.

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surviving until we are released. They are about our lives in prison. They aren't political songs per se, although our situations were created by politics." The song texts of Dialita emphasise struggle, perseverance, and hope. In the following section, I will describe how Dialita transformed the rewritten songs into public performance.

Performing

In 2006, a group of women who would later form Dialita performed in public for the first time when they sang the leftist anthem "The Internasionale" at a ceremony in memory of the revolutionary intellectual and Indonesia's most famous author, Pramoedya Ananta Toer. In 2009, they performed the song again at the funeral of publisher Joesoef Ishak (who had bravely published Pramoedya's quartet of novels during the New Order).

As the choir grew, they discussed their identity and purpose frequently and decided to be a choral group to remember 1965. Ibu Uchikowati stated, "our goal was not to make recordings, or to struggle for human rights, but to make a little money to share with survivors." On 12 April 2011, they formed *Paduan Suara Dialita* (The Dialita Choir) to perform at celebrations of family and friends. In 2015, they enlisted a group of officers and began collecting dues from members. Men have served in the capacities of vocal trainer, rehearsal leader, and choir conductor, but they do not formally belong to the organisation nor do they have a voice in its direction.[35] Ibu Uchikowati stressed this point as a way of "singing back" to the gendered ideology of the New Order.

Performing in a musical group enabled individual survivors to feel a sense of belonging and solidarity with other survivors. Ibu Irina explained, "I still don't like to speak to people I don't know. I get calls every September 30th from journalists asking me about my family, but I refuse them. But with Dialita I am able to speak up in public. I like to sing, but I don't want to do it alone—Dialita gives me a chance." Public performance established the conditions for Dialita to collaborate with activists and artists who have been using the arts to create broader historical awareness about 1965. For example, Dialita performed in a theatrical programme entitled "Nyanyi Sunyi Kembang-kembang Genjer" ("The Silent Song of Genjer Flowers"), written and directed by feminist and cultural activist Faiza Mardzoeki, in celebration of International Women's Day 2014.[36] Testimonials of women survivors formed the content of the programme, and Dialita performed in the background. Based on the positive

[35] For the recordings by Dialita and affiliated concerts, the choir was conducted by Martin Lampanguli, an accomplished musician and former political prisoner who was imprisoned on the island of Buru for fourteen years (see Figure 1).

[36] The event took place on 7–9 March 2014, and was sponsored by Institut Ungu, a feminist art and cultural space, and held at the Goethe-Institut in Jakarta.

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reception from the audience, Dialita began receiving invitations to perform at other events associated with art, activism, and politics.

Performing provides a newfound public visibility and audibility, but still produces instability and trepidation.[37] Ibu Irina revealed, "We have to be careful. First, we judge the situation: Who is inviting us? What kind of event is it? Where will it be held? If the program takes place indoors, we may do it. But if it's outdoors, there is more room for something dangerous to happen." Getting permits to perform from the police presents administrative obstacles and arbitrary refusals. Often permits are granted, only to be taken away at the last minute (a common occurrence with events dedicated to 1965 in general, especially around the time of the fiftieth anniversary of 1965, such as the 2016 Ubud Writers & Readers Festival in Bali). This unpredictability limits the scope of performances, and forces them to either cancel performances, or perform at places that do not require as many permits.

Public performance opens a space for "apolitical politics" (Hofman 2021:209), from informal family gatherings to official state events. However, this strategy is often misrecognised in reviews of their performances. In the following section, I will discuss the nature of apolitical politics in performances by Dialita, as they are mediated in reviews of performances by a younger generation of writers.

The 2016 Sanata Dharma Catholic University concert in Yogyakarta was a record launch attended by writers, artists, activists, intellectuals, and students.[38] The concert had the aura of something alternative and progressive due to Dialita's collaboration with several well-known indie musicians whose music is associated with sociopolitical critique (for example, Cholil Mahmud, Kartika Jahja, and Sisir Tanah, among others). Framing the audience space in the open-air plaza, the organisers had set up their own distribution outlet (or "distro"), with tables for vendors to sell books, CDs, zines, and merchandise. Spectators were served food associated with the *rakyat*, the common people of the 1960s, including plain-tasting wheat porridge (*bulgur*) and leafy vegetables (*beluntas* and *genjer*). In between songs, the group explained the formation of the choir around issues of 1965; publicised the biographies of songwriters and singers; and recounted how the songs were learned and sung in prison.

In a review of the concert, researcher and critic Michael HB Raditya stated that the women of Dialita faced false allegations, illegal imprisonment, and continuing social sanctions after their release.[39] But those political rights issues surrounding the group were "nothing new" ("bukan soal baru"; Raditya 2018:101). Rather, the concert was a happy event, a coming-out party in a public space for a group of women who had previously been

[37] In 2011, two members of Dialita were physically attacked by the Anti-Communist Front of Indonesia (*Front Anti Komunis Indonesia*, FAKI) at a public discussion about 1965 in Yogyakarta. The presence of police and local officials did not deter the violence (Irina, pers. comm., 16 June 2019).

[38] The concert is available for viewing on YouTube. I would like to thank attendees Agung Kurniawan; Venti Wijayanti; Rizky Sasono; and Syaura Quotrunadha for sharing their impressions and interpretations about the event.

[39] Raditya states that a choir named Dialita was silenced in 1965; but the choir was not named until 2011 (2018:101).

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discarded and forgotten by society ("telah dibuang dan tidak dianggap"; ibid.:102)—they smiled, sang loudly, with enthusiasm and energy, and in sync with young musicians and audience members. Eliding the socio-political context that had brought them to this point, Raditya focused on the affective quality of the performance. For example, the "tinkling on the piano made the audience feel warm and comfortable" (ibid.). The song "Friendship" was "so emotional as to produce goosebumps, and teary eyes, even more so while seeing the smiling faces of women who could not contain their enthusiasm" (ibid.:105). Although the quality of the musical performance "would have bothered people with well-trained ears (because the melody and harmony were not always in sync), most of the audience did not mind because the emotions and messages were so effectively presented" (ibid.:106).

The moving review by Raditya is evidence that Dialita's music is effectively communicating with a younger generation of listeners. Raditya's focus on emotions is central to Dialita's contestation of the pervasive and persistent Suharto-era memory of 1965. For Dialita, affect and politics go hand in hand. As Ibu Uchikowati stated, "through the medium of music, we touch the emotions of listeners. People whose hearts have been touched have been moved to study the history of 1965." But to represent the concert in terms of emotions and musical quality, without discussing the social political context of performance, potentially discourages further inquiry into the historical-political context of 1965. For example, Raditya notes that the song "Friendship" "seems to communicate that it is time to build friendships [among people on opposite sides of the issue] and to accept them [survivors] as an important part of history and social life" (ibid.:105). This narrative of reconciliation without truth does not account for the clash of memories that stand in the way of reconciliation and places the entire burden of achieving "acceptance" on the survivors rather than on the society that had discarded them in the first place. Further, Raditya states that the song "The World Belongs to Us" "seems to confirm that it is time to erase our differences and live together" (ibid.:104–105). Erasing differences is not the way that Dialita envisions reconciliation. Rather, it involves an acknowledgement of responsibility by the Indonesian government for past atrocities. Only then will the survivors feel a sense of shared ownership of the world (after the clever title of the song, "the world belongs to us"). These sentiments resonate more loudly for women who were denied equal rights in Indonesian society before 1965 (Blackburn 2004:98).

Another review of a Dialita performance reveals the strategic and subtle way that Dialita performs 1965, and the way the group is represented in journalistic accounts. In January, 2018, Dialita used a festive event of the political elite as an opportunity to promote an identification with an alternative memory of 1965. Guruh Soekarnoputra, the son of Sukarno and a member of the Indonesian People's Representative Council (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*), invited Dialita to perform at a birthday celebration for his sister Megawati Sukarnoputri, who had served as Indonesia's fifth president from 2001 to 2004. Guruh had heard Dialita perform songs associated with the Sukarno regime, and he wanted to present his sister with a live performance of two songs composed by their mother Fatmawati, "Buah Hati Pengarang Jantung" (My Sweetheart, My Beloved) and "Alam Desa" (The Village World). Guruh, an established pop musician, conducted the performance, which took place at the prestigious Jakarta Arts Centre (Taman Ismail Marzuki or TIM) in central Jakarta.

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TIM was established in 1968 by Suharto's New Order regime to support "anti-Communist artists, in ascendency after the purge of the left wing in 1965–66" (Hill 1993:245). TIM is named after Ismail Marzuki (1914–1958), a celebrated composer and a National Hero of Indonesia (*Pahlawan Nasional Indonesia*). In front of President Jokowi, high-ranking government officials, and representatives from the army and police, Dialita sang the two songs followed by a third song, "Resopim," which they had purposely left off the programme (in agreement with Guruh). "Resopim" is the title of a speech given by Sukarno on 17 August 1961 in which Sukarno presented his programme of *Re*volusi, *So*sialisme, and *Pim*pinan (Revolution, Socialism, and National Leadership).[40] The song "Resopim" was composed by Subronto K. Atmodjo (1929–1982), a close associate of Sukarno during the early 1960s and a member of LEKRA who was imprisoned on the island of Buru (1968–1977). [41] Ismail Marzuki belongs to the official musical "biography of the nation," whereas Subronto K. Atmodjo has been largely forgotten.

Members of Dialita expressed pride about singing "Resopim," a song composed by a political prisoner of 1965 that contains the reviled term "socialism," for an official government event. In fact, the members of Dialita had considered it too radical to perform previously in public or record on their albums. However, they felt emboldened to perform it for this occasion because Guruh had instigated the performance and would take responsibility for any repercussions. In a remarkable example of unisonance, members of the audience and (some) government officials sang along. In this moment, Dialita had successfully reanimated a Sukarno-era song in an effort to shape the public memory of 1965. Further, Dialita members expressed hope that their voices were being heard by the political elite, who could actually do something about the social status of survivors as well as those who had been denied justice in their lifetime. For Dialita, the public performance of "Resopim" represented a collective victory in the struggle for truth and recognition against a government that continues to deny justice for victims and survivors of 1965.

In a review of the concert, journalist Purba Wirastama represented Dialita as "a group of middle-aged women sympathetic to the victims [*korban*] of the 1965 event. They sing songs left by victims of political imprisonment as a form of reconciliation of the dark past" (Wirastama 2018). On one hand, the story makes it clear that in Indonesia the perception of Dialita as a group of middle-aged women (*perempuan paruh baya*) makes them unthreatening and therefore, listen-able, in relation to 1965. In this way, their apolitics provides the conditions that enable their politics. On the other hand, their voices were not being heard at all. In Wirastama's narrative, 1965 is a bounded and fixed temporal event (often referred to as the "dark past") that has been disarticulated from the present. Victims (*korban*) are portrayed as passive casualties of Indonesian political history, which matches the definition of victims as "sacrifice" in a religious or ritual context. According to Wirastama,

[40] Socialism in Indonesia was embraced by virtually every political party during the first two decades after independence (1945–65), but it encompassed a wide range of practices and meanings (Fogg 2021). Socialism was rejected from 1965 onwards.

[41] The score for "Resopim" was first published in the leftist daily *Bintang Timur* on 7 September 1961 (p. 3).

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"performance-as-reconciliation" provides living proof that the issue has been put to rest. However, there is no mention that Dialita performs *for* communicating historical awareness to spectators and listeners, or struggling *towards* reconciliation. There is no acknowledgement of Dialita's performance as an active participant in challenging the dominant memory of 1965. Like the previous concert review, this way of inscribing 1965 takes the onus off the reader/listener to pursue memory politics further.

By the end of 2019, Dialita had released two albums, performed in public approximately fifty times, and had been featured in a thirty-minute film ("Bangkit dari Senyap" ["Rising from Silence"], dir. Shalahuddin Siregar, 2016). Hundreds of news stories have been written about the group. The national television talk show "Kick Andy" devoted an entire episode to Dialita in May 2019 (Metro TV).[42] International recognition followed when Dialita was awarded the 2019 Gwangju Prize for Human Rights (Special Award) given by the May 18 Memorial Foundation in South Korea.[43] Performing music in public has taken on great political significance for ex-political prisoners and their families who were forced into hiding and prohibited from participating in the public sphere for decades. As Ibu Uchikowati stated, "After Dialita began performing and becoming known, women began coming out of the woodwork, including exiles in the Netherlands, to share songs and stories with us that they had composed or remembered." In all of these performances, Dialita "sings for" survivors who are afraid to speak out about their own experiences.

For Indonesian musicians who were prevented from learning about the state violence of 1965–66 in school, prison songs and patriotic songs of the 1950s and 1960s are something fresh and new. Composer Petrus Briyanto Adi (b. 1974), who co-produced Dialita's second album, stated: "for me and my generation of musicians and listeners, it was new territory to hear and perform these historical songs. The dark history was not the history of Ismail Marzuki, Kusbini, and other popular artists that we knew from the 1950s and 60s." As the truth came out, younger people started to question their history as one that needed to be "straightened out" (Sabarini et al. 2019). In the final section of this article, I will show the significance of collaborating and recording with young musicians, and circulating those recordings in the form of albums and online videos.

Sound Recording

Dialita's two CD recordings narrativise a history that has only recently been made audible through music. These recordings document the history of music in the detention camps,

[42] https://19651966perpustakaanonline.wordpress.com/2019/12/17/lagu-yang-tak-lagi-bisu-kick-andy-show-kisah-paduan-suara-dialita-kisah-kisah-dari-balik-jeruji-penjara-tapol-1965/.

[43] The Gwangju Prize commemorates the May 1980 pro-democracy uprising and is awarded to individuals, groups, and institutions that promote and advance human rights, democracy and peace.

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and demonstrate how modern musicians are making history knowable through sound. In 2014, human rights activist and scholar Ita Fatia Nadia brought Dialita to the attention of music producer Woto Wibowo (aka Wok the Rock) and artist Agung Kurniawan, who co-produced the 2016 album *Dunia Milik Kita* (DMK).[44] Ita Fatia Nadia had been researching and writing about the victims and survivors of 1965–66 for decades, and became involved with Dialita to promote national reconciliation through cultural forms (which she referred to as "cultural reconciliation"). Working with musicians in Yogyakarta, the choir created new arrangements to appeal to a young audience who have little or no understanding about Indonesia's violent and bloody history. Producer Agung Kurniawan describes the album as follows:

> This album is a monument to the tragedy of 1965 in the form of music. The choice of popular musicians to re-arrange "old" songs is a strategy that we used to close the gap between the history of 1965 and the younger generation. (pers. comm., 28 March 2018)

Kurniawan describes how the music was strategic for teaching a younger generation about a form of Indonesian history they had never learned about in school. His curation of the "monument to the tragedy of 1965 in the form of music" displaces the dominant memory of 1965 attached to the many New Order stone monuments, such as the Pancasila Sakti monument discussed earlier in this article. In this way, Dialita moves 1965 away from static sites of memory to fluid acts of remembering.

Kurniawan and music producer Wowok worked with Dialita and contemporary popular musicians, mostly indie singer-songwriters, to instill an alternative history of 1965 among a younger generation of listeners. In Indonesia, indie musicians are "a loose conglomerate of teenagers and twentysomethings committed to producing music and media 'on their own terms', that is, apart from the commercial or political interests of major corporations and state-financed institutions" (Luvaas 2009:247). Educated and middle-class, indie musicians are the first generation to adopt a wide variety of global musical choices available through MTV and the internet during the late 1990s and ensuing period of economic reform (*Reformasi*). Frustrated with the Suharto regime, they distanced themselves from "forms of expression associated with marginalized ethnic identities, governmental nation-building efforts, and the hegemonic categorical schema of the international music industry" (ibid.:248). As a result, indie music is modern, politically engaged, and eclectic in style. The producers of the album picked bands from a variety of genres and gave them free reign to interpret the lyrics in their own way, so that fans with diverse tastes in music would be encouraged to learn more about 1965.

In this section, I describe two different contemporary musical interpretations of two songs, "Ujian" (Test) and "Taman Bunga Plantungan" (Plantungan Flower Garden),

[44] The album was produced by Wibowo's net label *Yes No Wave Music* and Kurniawan's Indonesian Visual Art Archive (IVAA), with support from the Ford Foundation.

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on two Dialita albums. These recordings of the same song were made three years apart and illustrate the networks of solidarity between Dialita and a variety of contemporary musicians and their audiences. The members of Dialita recognised that the survival of the songs depended on transforming them for a younger generation of listeners, and so they encouraged musicians to create new interpretations. The collaboration with younger musicians, some of whom have little or no knowledge of 1965, aims to instill their particular collective memory of 1965.

Ujian

Ibu Siti Juswati Djubariah was a teacher imprisoned from 1965 to 1978 in Bukit Duri, Plantungan, and Bulu. She composed "Ujian" (Test) in the Bukit Duri prison in 1971. Dialita member Ibu Utati recalls learning the song from her (referred to as Ibu Jus): "In Bukit Duri, we did not have access to pen and paper, so we had to remember the songs to document them. After the prison administration office had closed, and it was safe to sing, we gathered under a cherry tree and Ibu Jus taught the song to us line by line." At Bukit Duri, political prisoners were allowed to gather in an outdoor area across from the administrative office for incarcerated women criminals (*Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Chusus Wanita*; LPCW). They shared the space, separated by a low wall. It was not safe for women political prisoners to sing during office hours because they feared the songs might anger the prison officials. It was better to be safe and silent rather than risk offending them. Further, the words and message expressed in the song "Ujian" could potentially attract unwanted attention from the guards, which could have negative effects on prisoners later (Ibu Utati, pers. comm., 24 March 2021). "Ujian" is a testament to the unity and steely resilience of women prisoners to withstand years of isolation and suffering, as shown in Figure 3a and Figure 3b.

Indie musician Leilani Hermiasih (a.k.a. Frau) created the arrangement and played the piano accompaniment for the recording of "Ujian" on *Dunia Milik Kita* (see Figure 1). Frau's version of "Ujian" uses several narrative framing devices to create a dialogue with the past in song. The setting of the text forms a verse (question) - refrain (answer). An intro and outro enclose three main sections: A (verse-refrain-verse) – B (instrumental interlude) – A' (refrain). In the dream-like instrumental intro, wandering major and minor chords bleed into each other and lead to the question: "Am I real gold or just an imitation?" ("am I a true cadre or not?").[45] The sparse piano accompaniment lays out the chord progression and weaves a counter-melody around the sung verse. Although the choir sings the refrain, the soloist has the dramatic final line ("it is certain that in the future we

[45] A "kader" (cadre) refers to a member of a political party. But it does not mean that all of the women in jail (or members of Dialita) were members of the PKI or another party.

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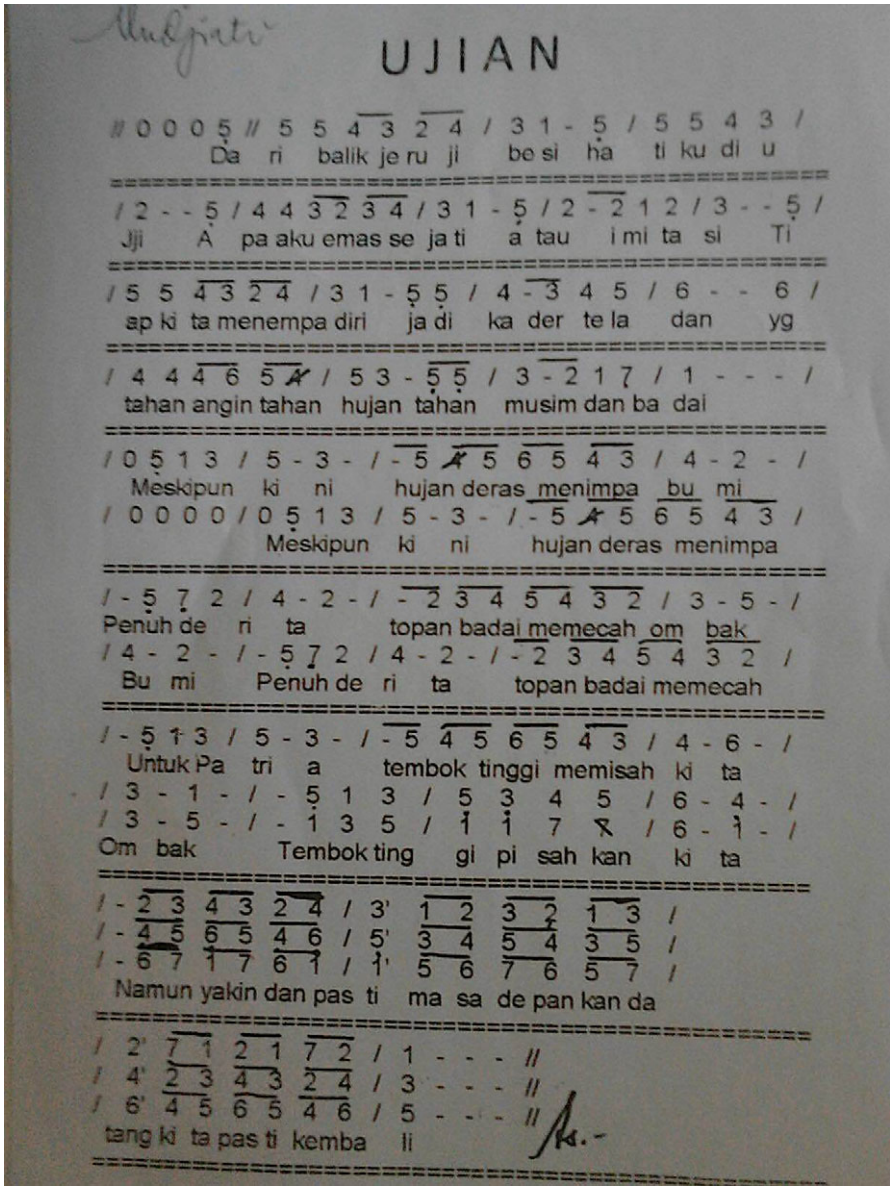

Figure 3a. "Ujian" lyrics, composed by Ibu Siti Juswati Djubariah.

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Indonesian	English Translation
Dari balik jeruji besi hatiku diuji	From behind steel bars my heart is tested
Apa aku emas sejati, atau imitasi	Am I real gold or just an imitation?
Tiap kita menempa diri jadi kader teladan	We forge ourselves to become exemplary cadres
Yang tahan angin tahan hujan tahan musim dan badai.	Who [can] withstand the wind, the rain, and the stormy weather.
Meskipun kini hujan deras menimpa bumi	Although now a heavy rain washes over the earth
Penuh derita topan badai memecah ombak	Full of suffering, this hurricane breaks the waves
Untuk patria tembok tinggi memisah kita	In our homeland, a high wall divides us
Namun yakin dan pasti masa depan kan datang kita pasti kembali	Yet it is certain that in the future we will return.

Figure 3b. Lyrics for "Ujian" with translation by the author.

will return") and the piano punctuates the statement for emphasis. The choir then sings the verse, but the refrain is delayed and unresolved. The middle section features an instrumental section on piano that repurposes material from the introduction, and then develops through several keys, syncopated rhythms, and moods. The virtuosic middle section uses light and shade to paint a visual or filmic setting for a turbulent scene, as depicted in the lyrics. The volume and tempo increase as a reflection of the wind, rain, and stormy weather in the text. In the final section of the song, the choir sings the refrain in a faster and more spirited tempo, and then abruptly slows down to exaggerate the final line: "it is certain that in the future we will return." After a long seven-second pause that challenges the listener to ask, "is it finally over?," the soloist repeats the line, but broken into parts, and accompanied by dissonant chords and single tones on the piano. The effect is haunting and dramatic. After all, no one had expected these women to return, either through the physical bodies and voices of the singers, or through the ephemeral songs of survivors.

In 2019, Dialita recorded a second album *Salam Harapan* (SH), produced by the Jakarta-based Rumahbonita Label and Dialita. All of the songs on the second album were composed by women. The concept for the second album came about after Dialita had performed at a 2017 concert "A Woman's Concert for Humanity: The Songs of Dialita" (*Konser Perempuan Untuk Kemanusiaan: Lagu Untuk Konser Dialita*). The album launch was very different from the *Dunia Milik Kita* launch described earlier. Held at the arts and cultural center Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM), the concert featured well-known singers in Jakarta's music and entertainment scene. Large video screens set up on back of the stage showed short video clips between songs in which members of Dialita explained their ideas, activities, and strategies for educating the public about 1965.

The musical arrangements on the two albums were also very different. Arrangers Junior Sumantri and Petrus Briyanto Adi (aka Adoy) incorporated "world music" styles (Celtic, Hawaiian, Gospel, Country, Electronic, Pop, and Rock) and instruments (*jembe*, bagpipe, synthesisers, tone-glass, steel guitar) to communicate the global human rights message of the songs (Petrus Briyanto Adi, pers. comm., 1 July 2019). Adoy's intention

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was to create light pop songs intended for sing-alongs, or, in his words, "songs you could sing together with friends and family":

> Based on our conversations with Dialita, we tried to reflect a sense of love and warmth, rather than a history of darkness and violence. They talked about survival rather than victimization and we tried to reflect those sentiments in sound. (pers. comm., 1 July 2019)

The simplicity of the arrangements is intended to emphasise the original spirit of the lyrics. He noted that "Ujian" consists of a melody and accompaniment, "the way the singers remembered it" (pers. comm., 23 Feb 2021). On one hand, "Ujian" can be dark and dramatic (as on the 2016 DMK), but the 2019 SH version is a light pop song accompanied by electric guitars, synth, electric bass, drum kit, piano, and violin. The straightforward forms (e.g., verse-chorus) and unambiguous harmonies stress the collective nature of the songs, which are easy for others to sing and play. The straightforward unornamented vocal style of delivering the lyrics, accompanied by soft-rock drumming, communicate an uplifting message. The ending "we will return" is calm, as if to state "we have returned," before a short fade-out. Indeed, the singers have returned, and the songs have survived. However, this is not to say that the problems of 1965 have been resolved, as stated by Ibu Uchikowati:

> For the women of Dialita, the meaning of the song "Ujian" is almost the same [as it was in the original context for women prisoners]. We are not imprisoned behind steel bars. But we live in a larger jail called Indonesia. We are not yet free because we have to live with the label "PKI children." We are tested every day: are we [still] imprisoned? Are we the original gold? Or just an imitation?" (pers. comm., 24 February 2021)

Although the upbeat song comes across as lighter in the SH version, it still reflects on the continuing social marginalisation of children whose parents were killed or imprisoned in 1965–66. "Ujian" asks about belonging to the nation and to history: are they real Indonesians, with the full rights of citizens, and not people erased from history? If they are, then why are they still stigmatised? Echoing the unresolved musical endings in both versions of this song, these questions are left unresolved.

Taman Bunga Plantungan

Plantungan was a women's prison for about five hundred political prisoners in central Java (south of Semarang). This isolated place served as a leper colony in the Dutch colonial period. The inhabitants referred to the region as "Plantungan" (or "Pelatungan") because the earth had black clay, which Javanese called *lantung* (Lestariningsih 2011:4–5); *lantung*/*latung* oil refers to crude petroleum. In the Plantungan prison, women were assigned to labour groups with different tasks, including cooking, sewing, and farming. The DMK album booklet has recipes for cooking some of the plants grown in the Plantungan garden,

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including the famous *genjer* (a type of lettuce) immortalised in the outlawed song "Genjer-genjer" (Arps 2011; Wieringa 2014).

Most of the women political prisoners in Plantungan were active in politics, arts, or sports (Lestariningsih 2011).[46] They were involved in pre-1965 struggles against colonialism, polygamy, child marriage, and discrimination against women (Wieringa 2002). Many of the women were teachers and activists in the PKI family, including Ibu Zubaedah Nungtjik A.R., who composed the song "Taman Bunga Plantungan" (Plantungan Flower Garden) in 1971. She was a prolific composer, teacher, and musician who played guitar and accordion, and led an *angklung* group at Plantungan.[47] A Gerwani leader, she was imprisoned at Bukit Duri (1965–1971) and Plantungan (1971–1978), where she composed many songs and performed with her Islamic-inspired *qasidah* group. In Plantungan, Ibu Utati recalls hearing her singing *seriosa* (semi-classical) songs in a nearby cell at night.

The cipher notation and lyrics for "Taman Bunga Plantungan" were stored by fellow prisoner and activist Mia Bustam, who is listed by name on the notation as one of three prisoners in charge of the Plantungan flower garden (see Figure 4a). After Mia Bustam's death in 2011, the song was discovered by her daughter Dialita member Ibu Nasti in 2014. Ibu Nasti brought the song to Dialita and it was taught to the group.

Ibu Endang Lestari, a Plantungan inmate, explained that women prisoners transformed the ground previously occupied by a hospital into a flower garden (*taman bunga*) (pers. comm., 4 July 2019). They brought in rocks and grass and other materials to make something beautiful to behold. These everyday tasks made things seem normal. Caring for Plantungan with their own hands was their way of humanising the cruel and de-humanising conditions of imprisonment. She explained that in the song, the flowers of Plantungan symbolise the women who stand firm in the garden, waving gracefully in the wind. Grounded by stones from the mountains, their strength never wavers. Pride of place translated to ownership and control of their fate. Figure 4a and Figure 4b show Ibu Zubaedah Nungtjik A.R.'s handwritten text, cipher notation, and notes for "Taman Bunga Plantungan."

In the following section I will compare two versions of "Taman Bunga Plantungan" from *Dunia Milik Kita* and *Salam Harapan*, respectively, in order to show how Dialita has encouraged two different groups of young musicians to generate new meanings about the past. As younger musicians add their own interpretations, the songs become part of an evolving repertoire of memories. "Taman Bunga Plantungan" is associated with the ensemble and popular music genre called *kroncong*, which likely derives from the music of Portuguese sailors who settled in Batavia (Jakarta) in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In conjunction with the early recording industry

[46] Inmates at Plantungan included prominent intellectuals, political leaders, and artists (e.g., Gerwani leader Umi Sardjono; artist and LEKRA leader Mia Bustam; *seriosa* singer Rose Pandanwangi; former Mayor of Makassar and member of Parliament Salawati Daud; higher education administrator Dr. Sumiyarsi Siwirni; film star Dahlia, among others).

[47] *Angklung* refers to tuned bamboo idiophones of various sizes that are played in groups.

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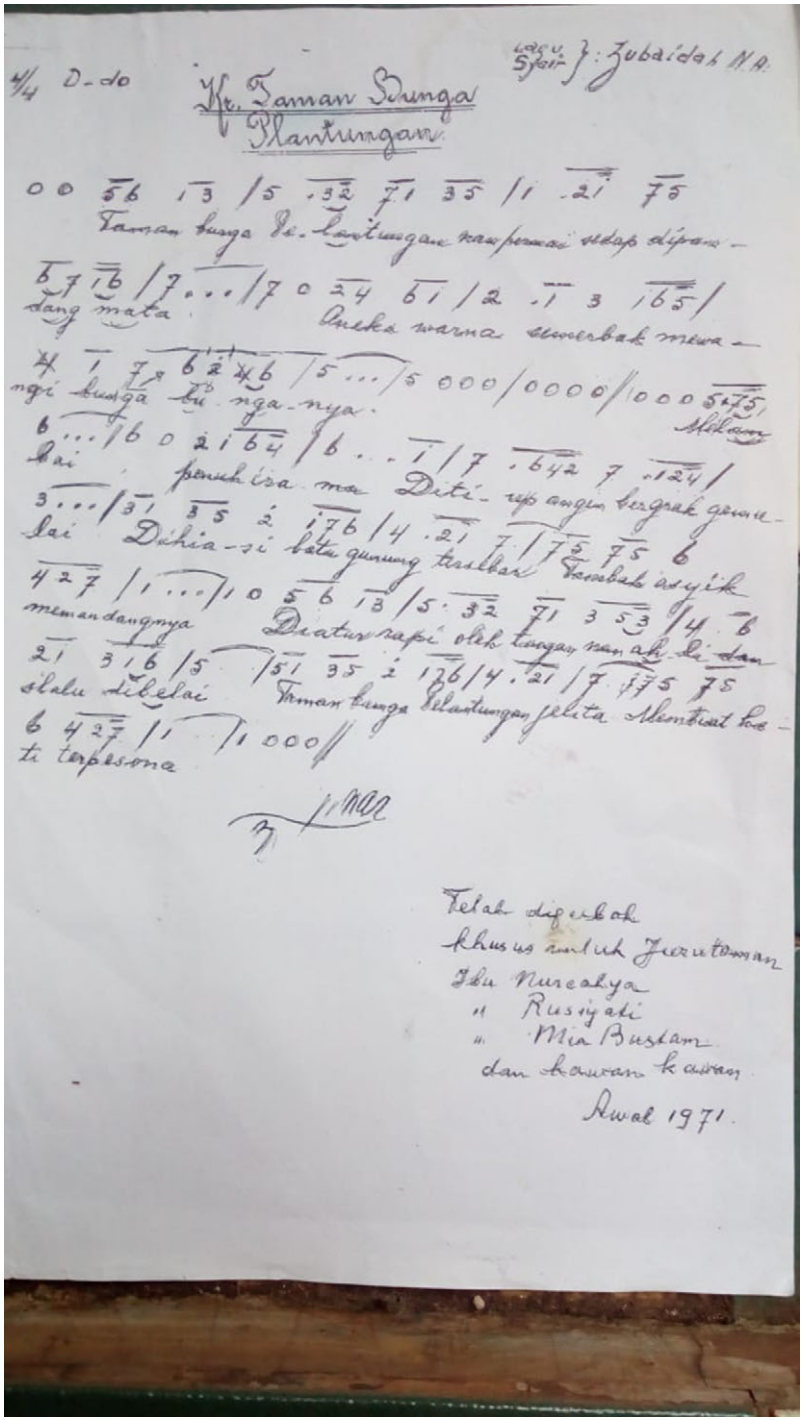

Figure 4a. Ibu Zubaedah A.R.'s handwritten lyrics, cipher notation, and notes for "Taman Bunga Plantungan"; melody (*lagu*) and text (*syair*) by Zubaedah Nungtjik A.R.

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Indonesian	English Translation
Taman bunga Pelantungan nan permai sedap dipandang mata Aneka warna semerbak mewangi bunga-bunganya	The beautiful flower garden Pelantungan is a feast for the eyes The flowers grow in many different colours and scents.
Melambai penuh irama ditiup angin bergrak gemulai Dihiasi batu gunung tersebar tambah asyik memandangnya	Waving rhythmically blown by the wind and moving gracefully Stones from the mountains add to their beauty.
Diatur rapi oleh tangan yang ahli dan s'lalu dibelai Taman bunga Pelantungan jelita membuat hati terpesona.	Arranged carefully by expert hands and always cared for The beautiful flower garden Pelantungan enraptures the heart.

Telah diperoleh khusus untuk juru taman: Ibu Nurcahya, Ibu Rusiyah, Ibu Mia Bustam dan kawan-kawan. Awal 1971.

Made especially for the caretakers of the garden: Ibu Nurcahya, Ibu Rusiyati, Ibu Mia Bustam and friends. At the beginning of 1971.

Figure 4b. Lyrics and notes for "Taman Bunga Plantungan" with translations by the author.

in the first half of the twentieth century, *kroncong* developed into the predominant form of popular music in what would become Indonesia (Yampolsky 2010:7). *Kroncong* was considered to be "uniquely Indonesian" in the 1950s (Yuliantri 2012:439) and it was popular in the detention camps of the 1960s and 1970s (Setiawan 1995:7). Prison guards or administrators would often request *kroncong* songs from musical groups made up of prisoners during national day celebrations. Tunes could be romantic and sentimental, but they could also be made revolutionary by composing new words (Yuliantri 2012:431). *Kroncong* versions of popular songs could also be threatening to officials in the New Order's jails.[48] *Kroncong*'s national popularity faded in the 1980s, although it is still practised and loved. As a form of music that was popular in the post-WWII period and in the prison camps, *kroncong* evokes the patriotism of the Sukarno period.

My comparison is based on four musical elements in the *kroncong* genre: song-form; vocal style; musical instrumentation; and idiom. "Taman Bunga Plantungan"

[48] Hersri Setiawan recounts the time when fellow prisoner Lie Bok Hoo sang "Hai, Kudaku Lari" (Run, my horse, run!): "Lie was accused of giving a secret sign to prisoners to escape because of the words "Run, my horse, run" (2020:190–191). When another fellow inmate, the famous actor/director Basuki Effendy, sang "Come Back to Sorrento," he was "accused of encouraging his Communist Party cohorts who were still in hiding and at work underground to quickly stage a 'comeback' and continue the fight!" (ibid.:192).

[49] The harmonic progression is [:I-I-I-I-V-II-V-V-IV-IV-I-V-I-I-I-V:] (after Yampolsky 2013:30). *Kroncong asli* also refers to a musical style that was dominant during the pre-1935 period ("true" or "original kroncong"). Yampolsky uses the terms "popular kroncong" for the pre-1935 period and "standard kroncong" for the period 1940s–1970s (ibid.). In the pre-1935 period, the *kroncong asli* musical style had the abovementioned harmonic

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	Song form	Vocal style	Musical instrumentation	Musical idiom
DMK	*Kroncong asli*	Unison; regular metre; unornamented	Standard *kroncong* acoustic instruments	Standard *kroncong* instrument roles and relationship between parts
SH	*Kroncong asli*	Solo; rhythmically flexible; highly ornamented; virtuosic	Modern electric instruments	Rhythm section/backup band

Figure 5. Musical characteristics of "Taman Bunga Plantungan" in two versions: *Dunia Milik Kita* and *Salam Harapan.*

belongs to a song-form called *kroncong asli* ("original kroncong"), which is characterised by a particular harmonic progression.[49] Although they share the same song-form, the two versions sound quite different from each other because they are performed using different vocal styles, musical instrumentation, and musical idioms (Figure 5).

I show how producers, composers, and musicians in the present have used these four musical elements as signs to construct new interpretations (meanings) about the past. In my analysis, I cite formal and informal interviews with producers, composers, and musicians to demonstrate how they mobilise these particular musical elements to represent images, feelings, places, and temporalities. Further, they juxtapose musical elements associated with different temporalities, in this case, as a way to bring the past and the present into dialogue. They combine these asynchronous elements to produce unexpected, jarring, and destabilising effects for listeners. For example, listeners have remarked that the music sounds new, unusual, and "aneh" (lit. "strange"), which, in Indonesian, can have multiple meanings. In this case, "aneh" has a positive connotation (as in, "that's interesting!" or "wow, I've never heard anything like *that* before!"). This is not to say that *all* listeners hear and interpret these examples the same way. My framing of this process of making meanings around sound as new, unusual, and strange is based on observations of Dialita in performance, as well as conversations and interviews with producers, musicians, and listeners. But instead of being buried for its non-conformity, Dialita is perceived as a welcome intervention in transitional justice.

The DMK version of "Taman Bunga Plantungan" mirrors the song as the producers imagined it would have sounded at the Plantungan detention camp during the 1960s and 70s. The musical instruments belong to the "standard" *kroncong* ensemble of "voice, violin, flute, two small plucked lutes ([including] ukulele, mandolin, banjo),

progression, as well as pantun lyrics (four-line poems made up of couplets with a particular rhyme scheme), fixed instrumentation, and a fixed accompaniment idiom (ibid.:32). However, "beginning around 1935, this complex of traits [musical style] came to be seen as the old style of *kroncong*, which was then retronymically designated *kroncong asli* ("true" or "original" *kroncong*), in order to distinguish it from a new style, called *kroncong modern* (modern *kroncong*)." The modern style "used the same chord structure as *kroncong asli*, perhaps with modifications, but tended to use linked couplet texts instead of pantun, and Euro-American dance-band instrumentation and idioms" (ibid.). Thus, the associations with original (old) and modern (new) have existed within the definition of *kroncong* itself since at least the mid-1930s.

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guitar, and cello" (Yampolsky 2010:9). Instrument roles and the relationship between parts also adhere to the "standard" *kroncong* idiom (ibid.). The violin, flue, and voice carry the main melody heterophonically and the cello imitates the *kendang* (drum) in Javanese *gamelan* (ibid.). In the DMK version, the producer, arranger, and musicians chose a type of musical arrangement to emphasise what happened at that place and time. In contrast, the unison singing and square "on-the-beat" rhythmic sensibility does not concur with the conventional performance practice of *kroncong* in that era. Therefore, it sounds "out of [historical] time." One explanation may be that, for both women in the detention camps and Dialita, unison singing was a way for choirs to demonstrate a group's solidarity in sound. In fact, unison singing for other kinds of music was common in choirs of the 1950s and 1960s, notably in compulsory songs about the nation (*lagu wajib*), such as school songs and marches used for national celebrations. For a younger generation of Indonesians who have never heard these authentic sounds of the past, the music of Dialita sounds new, interesting, and strange.

DMK producer Agung Kurniawan stated that "as an artist, I was mainly concerned with how to reach a younger generation that didn't know about 1965, or only knew about it from state propaganda films or LSM [NGO] propaganda. I was interested in this on a personal [artistic] level rather than a political one" (pers. comm., 4 July 2019). Although purposefully creating a portrait of the historical past (retro), the DMK version was not intended to be a relic, nor even necessarily *for* survivors. Rather, it was an artistic collaboration between producers, musicians, and the Dialita choir. Its targeted audience was "hipsters," urban Indonesians in their teens and twenties who see themselves as modern, transnational, and politically engaged. As Kurniawan noted, "We were drawn from the perspective of retro to *kroncong*. We knew that it would appeal to hipsters who are always looking for something fresh and new" (pers. comm., 4 July 2019). The producers created [a representation of] something old, for people who repurposed it into something new. Indeed, favourable reviews have appeared in online zines catering to hipsters including *Rolling Stone* (Indonesia), *Pophariini*, *Whiteboard Journal*, *Hai*, *Siasat Partikuler*, among others.[50]

For hipsters, however, not just anything considered old is appreciated as something new (retro). In this case, the connection to the tragedy of 1965 appeals to hipsters' taste. As arranger and musician Erie Setiawan stated: "The aim of this album is to introduce political history through music to a younger generation. I personally do not know much about the political history of that era. As an Indonesian, the history of 1965 is tragic" (pers. comm., 27 March 2018). In putting together the arrangement, Setiawan stated, "I tried to feel the singers' world full of conflict, and to articulate their profound struggle, strength, and love of life" (pers. comm., 14 March 2021). Setiawan created the arrangement in the

[50] https://pophariini.com/harapan-baru-paduan-suara-dialita/; https://www.whiteboardjournal.com/ideas/music/melalui-salam-harapan-penyintas-tragedi-1965-melantunkan-harapan-baru/; https://hai.grid.id/read/07569702/dialita-ketika-frau-hingga-cholil-erk-mengiringi-karya-paduan-suara-yang-hampir-hilang?page=all; https://siasatpartikelir.com/dialita-bercerita-di-ruang-putih/.

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kroncong idiom of beautiful flowing melodies with florid accompaniment of plucked strings, flute, and violin. But he embellished the style in order to improve on the past for a present (and future) generation of listeners. For Setiawan, "as an arranger, I have to make the song better. I looked at photos of the Plantungan prison online to imagine what it looked like. Then, I put in some modulations here and there and arranged the harmonies to make [the song] stronger and more beautiful" (ibid.). His musical contributions aimed to synchronise the singers' struggles with the present sensibilities of their audience.

These multiple voices, and their symbolic associations with different moments in the history of *kroncong*, participate in a dynamic conversation about old and new, past and present, in-time and out-of-time. These extra-temporal musical voices destabilise the dominant Suharto-era narrative about 1965, and instead model in sound a public dialogue about history. As a group choral activity, the style of unison singing gave the women of Dialita the confidence to express their sorrow and anger about the past, as well as their aims and aspirations for the future. But it was the contemporary musical arrangement and performance of something considered old (or retro) that appealed to young urban hipsters.

In the *Salam Harapan* (SH) version, sung by *kroncong* star Endah Laras, the arrangement borrows the violin from the standard *kroncong* ensemble, and the vocal part is reminiscent of post-1950s *kroncong*. But it has modern instruments: electric guitar, electric bass, piano, and synthesisers, as well as a drum kit. The musicians constitute a backup band or rhythm section whose role is to provide the rhythmic pulse, harmonic accompaniment, and groove for the vocalist. The performance idiom of accompanying instruments derives from a "category of 'progressive songs' (*lagu2 progressive*) consisting of Euro-American-style songs played in cocktail lounge, non-*kroncong* arrangements… which would come to be called 'entertainment' (*hiburan*)" in the 1950s (Yampolsky 2013:33).

The virtuoso style of singing, and the prominent position of the voice in the recording, compels the listener to identify with the beauty, emotion, and skill of Endah Laras's voice. Sung in a slower tempo, the vocal style reflects a post-WWII style of *kroncong*, which had become dignified, nostalgic, and patriotic. Endah Laras' vocal style is similar to *seriosa*, a semi-classical style modelled on European art songs that rose to prominence in the 1950s and 1960s and often contained nationalist sentiments.[51] Her vocal ornaments (*cengkok*) adhere to high standards of correctness. Endah admires Plantungan from a distance, and listeners admire the beauty of Plantungan through Endah's voice. This arrangement foregrounds an identification with the singer admiring something beautiful, rather than someone who experienced it firsthand (as in the DMK version). By interpreting the song as an artistic presentation by Endah Laras, the musical style draws the listener to the beauty of Plantungan. But what could possibly be beautiful

[51] During the 1960s, several composers affiliated with Lekra composed *seriosa* (e.g., Amir Pasaribu, Sudharnoto, Muchtar Embut).

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about a prison? It is the beauty of a flower garden in the midst of oppressive conditions of prison that gave women hope, optimism, and strength to carry on. Under these oppressive conditions, the women created something beautiful to behold. This arrangement emphasises the prisoners' agency to interpret oppressive conditions in their own way.

However, the vocal part and the chord sequence of the accompaniment, like the DMK version, embody the structure and feeling of *kroncong asli.* The slow tempo allows the singer to demonstrate her artistic skills at ornamenting the long flowing melodies (with glissando, vibrato, ornaments specific to *kroncong*, and singing over the bar lines). These characteristics constitute good *kroncong asli*, which is meant to be sung by a solo singer (not a unison choir, as in the previous example).[52]

These examples demonstrate different sonic frames from which to view and hear Indonesian women and politics in history, not only in relation to the Suharto-era interpretation of history, but to each other. These two versions of the same song destabilise a fixed memory of the Indonesian tragedy, and generate dynamic and fluid interpretations, opportunities for discussion and debate, and new information about 1965–66. These examples show how the music has survived in multiple versions performed by different groups of musicians, in different locations, and for diverse audiences. They expand the space for remembering and leave loose ends and gaps that no singular account can fill.

Conclusion

Dialita began as a way to help women survivors experiencing trauma. The group developed into a collective voice for truth and reconciliation. I have focused on the formation, discourse, and musical practices of Dialita as a women's grass-roots organisation of memory activists that uses sound to change the way the past is remembered. Political potentialities for truth and reconciliation emerge through the collectively shared act of singing. Through the act of singing, Dialita is able to "sing for" a community of survivors, "sing to" audiences in performances, "sing with" each other through collective activity, and "sing against" those in power who continue to blame the victims for the Indonesian tragedy. As I have shown, music in the time of Indonesia's mass killings is an act of public performance, public listening, and public history in the present.

Dialita performs a discursive shift from victims and survivors to agents of historical change in several ways. First, they shift the New Order focus of 1965 from the killing of generals to the aftermath of imprisonment and ongoing stigma. Secondly, they move the debate about anti-Communism, violence, and the army to human rights, women's rights, and the writing of history. Third, their songs and stories express hope for a future of

[52] In performance, Endah Laras often dresses in the traditional Javanese *kain* (skirt) and *kebaya* (blouse), displaying a refined Javanese-ness associated with the 1950s and 1960s.

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possibility, rather than a past of suffering. Fourth, although they consider themselves "apolitical," many of the women in Dialita are active in other human rights and women's organisations.[53] Fifth, they selectively participate at events that focus on national reconciliation. Finally, Dialita encourages people to participate in a national dialogue, not only about the history of 1965, but about human rights and citizenship more broadly.

Taken together, revisiting 1965 is still a contested terrain in Indonesia's political climate. The army, as well as Islamist political parties and organisations, see these efforts as a devious plot to put communism back on the political spectrum, even though communism is rarely mentioned. Understandably, some people, including survivors, want to leave the past behind, whereas others just do not think remembering the past is that fruitful or important. Some survivors are still forbidden by certain family members to interact with other family members. And despite a younger generation of people who have no interest in revisiting 1965, the memories of state-supported violence live on more loudly than ever in the songs of women survivors, who "sing for" those who can no longer sing for themselves.

Despite promises by two recent presidents, no government in Indonesia has acknowledged that hundreds of thousands of its own citizens were massacred, imprisoned, and tortured. Even though the New Order is gone, many of the killers are still in power, as dramatised in Joshua Oppenheimer's brilliant reenactment documentary film *The Act of Killing* (2012). Communism has become an increasingly dirty word in Indonesia, and anti-communist and anti-Chinese violence are on the rise (Hearman 2015). Contestations between Islamist groups and liberal groups have intensified. Parties affiliated with the New Order proliferated in the 2019 election. The Jokowi regime's political investment in maintaining the Suharto-era memory of 1965 continues to work against alternative voices of history.

Although they were carried by survivors and maintained in memory for decades, the songs have only recently become audible through the music of Dialita. Dialita aims to educate people about this bloody chapter of Indonesian history, and advocates social justice for survivors and their families. For younger generations of Indonesians, it remains to be seen whether these stories, images, and sounds about the past, produced in the present, will constitute the collective memories of the future. Public performances, intergenerational musical collaborations, as well as material manifestations (musical notations; CD and videorecordings) have already added to the "biography of the nation" (Hersri 1995). As Indonesians themselves have begun to reassess the pivotal actions of 1965 through music, this research amplifies those silenced musical histories.

Through its activities, Dialita participates in broadening the definition of victim and survivor. The children of those killed or captured are victims and survivors, but the

[53] These include The Foundation for Research into Victims of the 1965–66 Massacre (Yayasan Penelitian Korban Pembunuhan 1965–66, YPKP); Institut Ungu (The Purple Institute); The Indonesian Women's Association (Perhimpunan Perempuan Indonesia, Perpeni); and The Women's Center for Communication and Information (Pusat Komunikasi dan Informasi Perempuan, Kalyanamitra); among others.

[54] Perpetrators of the violence have also described themselves as victims of the New Order state (Dwyer 2010:234).

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younger generation have also been victims of history.[54] The question thus becomes, "who survives, what survives, and in what form?" The people who were killed cannot be brought back to life. However, as the living breathe life into these exiled songs, they contribute to new narratives of the nation's history. In some cases, the songs and memories are all that is left. As the last generation of survivors is dying off, it is even more urgent to preserve their memories in music. As Ibu Uchikowati told me, "the songs themselves have a soul." As a result, the songs did not fade into oblivion, or become historical remnants of a buried past. Enacted through rewriting, performing, and recording, they are living sonic histories of survival itself.

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