

## NOSTALGIA IN MUSICAL LYRICS WITHIN THE ORKESTRA JAWA SENANDUNG KIDUNG BOCAH

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### Abstract

The long-held belief that nursery songs are exclusively for children is not entirely accurate. Nursery songs are created by adults from the perspective of a child. Essentially, these songs are a reflection of an adult's stories or imagination about a joyful and memorable childhood. This impression is evident in the lyrics and words found in the nursery songs. Understanding the gap between nursery songs from a child's perspective and that of an adult presents an opportunity for a new discourse on their transformation in the current digital era. This study investigates the transformation of nursery songs in the digital era and within the *Orkestra Jawa Senandung Kidung Bocah* (OJSKB). To achieve this, a mixed-method approach was used, comparing the traditional nursery folk songs (*lagu dolanan anak*) with their modern renditions by the OJSKB, and interpreting secondary data from existing literature. The analysis follows three main stages of restatement: (a) rephrasing the data to ensure an accurate understanding; (b) finding and describing the patterns within the data; and (c) interpreting the findings. The research findings are expected to demonstrate the transformation of nursery songs in terms of orchestral arrangement, the manner in which adults perform them, and the musical nostalgia they evoke. This study provides empirical evidence of how children's songs are being transformed in the present.

**Keywords:** children's songs, Javanese orchestra, musical lyrics, nostalgia

### Introduction

Amidst the proliferation and widespread adoption of foreign and colloquial languages, it has been observed that a segment of Indonesian musicians remains devoted to expressing themselves through songs in Javanese and Indonesian, with a particular focus on children's songs. This phenomenon is by no means recent; it has persisted over time, aligning with the ever-changing dynamics of the Indonesian music industry.

As articulated by Merriam (1964), music fulfills several critical functions, including: serving as a physical response, a medium for communication, an outlet for emotional expression, a form of symbolic representation, a mechanism for reinforcing conformity to social norms, a contributor to cultural continuity and stability, an agent for societal integration, a source of aesthetic pleasure, and a means of entertainment. The contemporary transformation of traditional children's play songs (*lagu dolanan anak*), notably exemplified by the emergence of the



Javanese orchestra *Senandung Kidung Bocah*, constitutes a compelling phenomenon. This group is noteworthy for revitalizing these traditional songs within a fresher orchestral format, thus enhancing their appeal and acceptability among the younger generation. Furthermore, these children's play songs have been demonstrably linked to evoking musical nostalgia.

The purpose of this research is to address the shortcomings of previous studies, which have paid insufficient attention to children's songs that adapt and transform amidst the current prevalence of adult songs. The rise of adult songs being sung by children has an impact on children. Simultaneously, it is uncommon to find adults singing children's songs from an adult interpretation. The emergence of this new perspective from adults causes children's songs to undergo a transformation in both musical and non-musical aspects.

### ***The Transformation of Traditional Children's Play Songs***

Studies concerning the transformation of art can be broadly categorized into several tendencies. Firstly, there are transformation studies that focus on changes in the form of artistic presentation (Parmadie et al., 2018). Further research by Putra et al. (2023) illustrates how the conception of instruments, songs, and the scale system of the traditional *Krumpyung* music were modified to become more modern, such as through the use of electric guitars, bass, and drums. Meanwhile, the songs performed are contemporary, featuring a change in the nuance of the *dangdut* genre, which is blended with a diatonic scale system. The objective of this modification is not to alter the authenticity of the traditional *Krumpyung* music, but rather to serve as a persuasive step toward regeneration and community support for traditional music. Secondly, there are studies on the transformation of media in art (Diaz, 2016). This type of study primarily examines the transformation of art based on the tools or media used in the artwork, focusing on how art adapts to changes and the current trend of digitalization. The studies mentioned above demonstrate the complex academic discourse regarding the transformation of art.

### **Method**

The research methodology employed is qualitative, focusing on traditional children's play songs (*lagu dolanan anak*) that have been arranged in an orchestral format. The musical and lyrical meanings are analyzed, and subsequently, coding is applied to ascertain the musical nostalgia present in the children's play songs.

### **Findings and Discussion**

#### ***Children's Play Song Lyrics***

Lyrical texts possess both a physical and an internal structure. The physical or linguistic structure can be divided into several elements, including: diction, imagery, concrete words, figurative language (rhetorical devices), versification, and textual layout. Conversely, the internal structure consists of four elements: theme (sense), the poet's feeling, tone, and message (intention). The utilization of songs as a medium is quite effective in conveying a message. The words within the song lyrics play a crucial role in message delivery. It is also asserted that when a person hears or sees words, a mental concept or image is formed. These concepts subsequently connect with the realities or objects existing outside of language, a

process known as association. The relationship between the concept and the objects it refers to is termed reference.

Furthermore, it is explained that word choice, or diction, is fundamentally the result of the deliberate effort to select specific words for use in sentences, paragraphs, and discourse. Based on this expert opinion, the author posits that diction is the outcome of selecting words through a person's mastery of vocabulary, which they deem appropriate for use in writing or speaking (Wijana, 2015). Below is an example of children's play song lyrics.

*Kidang talun mangan kacang talun  
Mhil kedhemil mil kedhemil, si kidang mangan lembayung  
Tikus pithi nduwe anak siji, cicit cuwit cicit cuwit  
Maju perang wani mati  
Gajah belang, seka tanah sebrang  
Nuk renggunuk nuk renggunuk, gedhene meh padha gunung  
(Kidang Talun)*

The description of the song *Kidang Talun* is a depiction of the *kidang*, a type of deer or small ruminant, eating heartily. The phrase "*mil kethemil mil kethemil*" suggests an association with enjoying food slowly and thoroughly, nibbling bit by bit. Similarly, the small mouse is described with the sound "*cicit cuwit cicit cuwit*." The following stanzas shift to a story about an elephant that comes from a land across the sea, outside of Java. Its massive body is likened to a mountain, and its slow walk is described using the phrase "*nuk renggunuk nuk renggunuk*."

*Menthok-menthok tak kandhani  
Mung rupamu angisin-ngisini  
Mbok yo aja ngetok, ana kandhang wae  
Enak-enak ngorok ora nyambut gawe  
Menthok menthok mung lakumu  
Megal-megol gawe guyu  
(Menthok)*

The description of the song *Menthok* (Muscovy Duck) is a portrayal of the animal whose slow walk, described as *megal-megol* (waddling or swinging its hips from side to side), causes observers to laugh. Its appearance is noted as unattractive and embarrassing, leading it to simply remain inside the pen, sleeping and engaging in no activity.

From the children's play songs *Kidang Talun* and *Menthok*, a shared theme emerges: the theme of animals that are easily encountered or already familiar. Consequently, the author projects their feelings into the song lyrics with an appealing tone and rhyme, and incorporates a moral lesson to observe and learn from the behavior of these animals.

Diction, imagery, concrete words, figurative language (rhetorical devices), and versification are captivating elements within these children's play songs. Concurrently, there are four elements of the internal structure: theme (sense), the poet's feeling, tone, and message (intention). Another song example is as the following.

*Kodok ngorek kodok ngorek, ngorek pinggir kali  
Theot teblung theot teblung, theot theot teblung  
Bocah bodo bocah bodo njaluk dijamoni  
Jamu apa, jamu apa? Jamu temu temu lawak  
Bocah pinter bocah pinter sesuk dadi dokter  
Numpak motor numpak motor numpak motor mabur  
(Kodok Ngorek)*

A number of songs translated from Javanese children's play songs into Indonesian are also sung, alongside the Javanese originals. One such translation is the song *Kodok Ngorek* (Croaking Frog) which becomes:

*Kodok ngorek kodok ngorek, bernyanyi di pinggir sungai  
Theot teblung, theot teblung begitu bunyinya.  
Anak pintar anak pintar belajar yang jujur  
Apapun cita-citamu pasti terwujud*

The outpouring of words, which are strung together to convey an idea, must be clear, concise, and precise, so as not to cause misinterpretation. Clear means that the word choice and structure are correct; concise means not verbose; and precise means not ambiguous. A good understanding of writing rules is expected to achieve this. It is further stated that when creating lyrics, a poet or songwriter must be truly skilled in processing words. Through a song, a person expresses feelings, hopes, aspirations, and ideals that reflect the worldview and spirit of their era.

From this perspective, the beauty of children's songs becomes more apparent when they are sung with the right arrangement (Abdullah et al., 2023). Previously, children's songs were often sung in a simple form, typically with only one voice and basic musical accompaniment such as piano or guitar (Lytra, 2011). While this simple arrangement was sufficient to introduce the melody and lyrics to children, children's songs began to be arranged more complexly as time evolved (Borukh, 2019). Modern arrangements not only add harmony and more dynamic rhythms but also integrate more varied contemporary musical elements (Gammon, 2011). The addition of backing vocals, group vocal arrangements, and the use of digital technology make children's songs more engaging and align with the tastes of today's children (Khoiro, et al., 2023). This change does not diminish the essence of the children's song itself; rather, it enriches the experience of listening to and singing the song (Yang & Lee, 2017), causing children's songs to transform in both musical and non-musical aspects.

### *1. Javanese Orchestra Kumandang Kidung Bocah*

According to Guntur Nur Puspito, the Javanese Orchestra *Kumandang Kidung Bocah* was formed on July 23, 2024. This date also marked their first performance, held in commemoration of National Children's Day. This orchestra is a collaboration with the relevant agency, the UPT Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, and is fully supported by the Department of Culture (*Kundha Kabudayan*) of the Special Region of Yogyakarta.

Guntur's reason for reviving traditional children's play songs (*lagu dolanan bocah*) stems from his concern over the proliferation of mass-marketed adult

content heavily consumed by minors. Guntur hopes that the performance of the *Kidung Bocah* songs will reintroduce noble cultural works (*karya-karya adiluhung*) and serve as a medium for nostalgia for the generations of the 80s and 90s.

Furthermore, the Head of the Special Region of Yogyakarta Department of Culture (Kundha Kabudayan), Dian Lakmi Pratiwi, emphasized that the choice of children's song repertoire presented in this event is not merely for entertainment, but also an effort to provide an understanding of local cultural values closely associated with Javanese local wisdom. Thus, the children's play songs are expected to serve as an educational tool that enriches knowledge and imparts positive values to the younger generation.

She also stated that the orchestral music form can act as a bridge and inspire children to continue to love and understand the traditional values they have inherited. The Javanese Orchestra Kumandang Kidung Bocah offers a new perspective, providing not only a captivating artistic experience but also revitalizing the beauty of children's songs that are often overlooked.



Figure 1. The *Kendang* Instrument in the Orchestra

The traditional instrument played in the orchestra is the gendang or kendang (Javanese drum), which collaborates with the percussion section and the orchestra as a whole. In certain sections, a kendang solo is featured to provide a strong, traditional Javanese regional nuance.

## 2. *Musical Transformation of Traditional Children's Play Songs*

The musical transformation is evident in the melodic aspect, which is enriched and features a greater variety of melodies. The use of diverse and complex chords and harmonies also supports the transformation of the play songs into an orchestral format. The instrumentation is richer because various orchestral instruments are aligned and complement the traditional instruments in accompanying the play songs. This results in a broad musical dynamic, composed by the arranger and orchestra conductor, Guntur Nur Puspito. The musical texture is a more complex polyphonic or homophonic structure.

Table 1. Musical Aspects of Traditional Children's Play Songs

Aspect	Traditional Children's Play Song	Children's Song with Orchestra
Melody	Simple, easy to remember	Enriched, has variations
Harmony	Simple or non-existent	Complex, uses various chords
Accompaniment	Simple (hand-clapping, simple instruments) or a <i>cappella</i>	Rich, involves various orchestral instruments
Dynamics	Limited, dependent on the children's singing	Broader, regulated by the conductor and arrangement
Musical Texture	Monophonic or simple homophonic	Polyphonic or more complex homophonic

### 3. Transformation of Sociocultural Aspects

The presentation in the orchestral format provides a new atmosphere, and this novelty is evident in the context of usage, participation, cultural preservation, and emotional impact. In the context of music performance, the concert serves as a means of education and recording. Participation is more passive for the audience, focusing on the appreciation of the performance as it constitutes a new experience. This transformation is an innovative way to introduce and preserve children's play songs as an aspect of cultural heritage preservation. The audience response demonstrates admiration, appreciation for the beauty of the music, and a deeper emotional involvement.

Table 2. Socio-Cultural Aspects of Traditional Children's Play Songs

Aspect	Traditional Children's Play Song	Children's Song with Orchestra
Context of Use	Children's games, daily social interaction	Music performances, educational concerts, recordings
Participation	Active, all children can sing and move	More passive for the audience, focuses on appreciating the performance
Cultural Preservation	Direct way of passing on oral traditions and cultural values	Innovative way to introduce and preserve play songs
Emotional Impact	Sense of togetherness, joy in playing	Awe, musical beauty, deeper emotions



Figure 2. *Buto Cilik* dance serves as a complement to the song *Buto Galak*, performed with agility to better illustrate the lyrics of the children's play song.

*Buto-buto galak, solahmu lunjuk-lunjuk  
Sarwi sigrak-sigrak, nyandhak kanca nuli tanjak  
Bali ngadheg maneh, rupamu ting celoneh  
Iki buron apa tak sengguh buron kang aneh  
Lha wong kowe..we..we..sing marai ihi-ih  
Aku wedi ayo kanca padha bali  
Galo kae galo kae, mripate plerak-plerok  
Kulite ambengerok  
Hi hi hi aku wedi  
Ayo kanca padha bali*



Figure 3. The blending of the play song and the dance depicts (or illustrates) children's play.

#### 4. *Repertoire*

Traditional children's play songs (*Lagu Dolanan anak*) are usually written in numerical notation (cipher notation), and singers are given the freedom to



actions in the present. Nostalgia can concurrently thrive as hope, being both retrospective and prospective.

The event, which was held as part of the music arts development program by Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, featured a repertoire of children's songs that have become part of the nostalgia for many generations. Ranging from "*Tak Lela Lela Ledhung*", "*Lir-Irir*", to "*Padhang Bulan*", each song possesses its own charm capable of evoking sweet childhood memories.

The experience of listening to these traditional children's play songs (*lagu dolanan anak*) when one is already an adult or a parent brings back memories of the past. Some of these memories or instances of nostalgia include:

a. *Memories of parents*

Children's play songs bring back memories of the mother, father, or grandparents who chanted the songs during childhood. As expressed in the following impressions:

*"Kidang Talun reminds me of my late Father. When I was little, I was often entertained by the shadow of a hand on the wall forming a kidang (deer) head while he sang this song" (A)*

*"It reminds me of when I was small, being sung to right before bedtime 60 years ago by my late Father and Mother" (B)*

Childhood memories under the care of parents who told stories and sang the *Kidang* song become an unforgettable experience. The sense of closeness (A) with a parent, particularly the Father, is clearly evident upon listening to the *Kidang* song as it is revived in *Kumandang Kidung Bocah*. The experience and nostalgia of childhood resurface, even after more than 60 years for (B). The bedtime memories still strongly associated with the *Kidang* song bring forth a deep longing for parents, even when the listener has become a parent themselves.

b. *Memories of the hometown*

Traditional children's play songs also serve as a reminder of one's hometown. The longing of the diaspora living abroad to return to their hometown is expressed in the following statement:

*"One of the things that makes it impossible to let go and makes me want to immediately return home to Indonesia is its kidungs (songs) / dendangs (chants). Greetings from an overseas migrant." (C)*

*"Very nice listening to some of the songs my grandmother taught us...grandmother mbah Sitoek keturunan Jawa living and now I live in Rep. Suriname...South America" (D)*

*Kumandang Kidung Bocah* becomes a remedy for the longing for one's homeland in Indonesia, but also a reminder of the ancestors originating from the island of Java.

c. *Experience of playing events*

Children's play songs indicate that these songs accompanied the childhood experience of playing, along with the atmosphere surrounding it, as shown in the following quotes:

*"My dance when I was little was just like this; it reminds me of everything. It felt so good when it was a bright evening, with the moonlight, playing with friends. Peace be upon us." (E)*

*"I'm touched, it reminds me of when I was little, playing in the yard under the bright full moonlight." (F)*

d. *Experience with the Javanese Orchestra*

*"Amazingly cool, the orchestra is unique because it blends various instruments, both traditional and modern. The songs used are also Javanese children's play songs that make us nostalgic for childhood. This is also a way to preserve the nation's culture."*

*"I almost couldn't hold back the tears, listening to songs from my childhood, supported by a beautiful arrangement that pays attention to the theme and lyrics of each song. Is it because I miss these songs so much... sluku sluku batok, buto galak, jaranan, kodok ngorek, lir ilir, kembang jagung etc... rare songs that are almost lost to time. Thank you and congratulations on the success of the Javanese Orchestra team. May good fortune always accompany every step of the team members... greetings from Blitar, the Land of Bung Karno. Rahayu rahayu (peace and prosperity)." (G)*

## **Conclusion**

The Javanese Orchestra '*Kumandang Kidung Bocah*' is not merely a music performance, but also an artistic offering that evokes nostalgia and takes the audience on a journey through their childhood. With such great enthusiasm from the public, the Javanese Orchestra and this event serve as proof of the importance of musical art in enriching and weaving cultural diversity in Yogyakarta. The musical nostalgia transformation in the Javanese Orchestra *Senandung Kidung Bocah* (Note: The text appears to mix the names, using *Senandung Kidung Bocah* here instead of *Kumandang Kidung Bocah*) is evident in aspects such as melody, harmony, accompaniment, dynamics, and musical texture. Furthermore, it also carries the aspects of cultural preservation, introducing Javanese cultural heritage to the younger generation, and in the realm of music education, expanding musical insight into one's own traditions. Additionally, it serves as an artistic appreciation effort to foster love for Javanese music and its collaborations. This collaboration also enhances intercultural understanding by opening a window for audiences from other regions to recognize children's play songs in Java, which likely also exist in other regions with different variations and languages but contain the same message and context.

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