

A study of *stambul II* singing style in the Muntilan *Keroncong Putra Kasih* orchestra

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to describe *stambul II* singing style in the Muntilan *Keroncong Putra Kasih* Orchestra by using proper vocal techniques. The research method for this study is descriptive qualitative method. The data sources were obtained from experts and singers mastering *stambul II* singing style. The data was obtained through the process of observation, interviews and documentation. The data analysis was undertaken in four stages: analysing the data collection, data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions or data verification. The results showed that in singing *stambul II* songs in the Muntilan *Keroncong Putra Kasih* Orchestra, the singers have not yet acquired mastery of the vocal techniques. Those vocal techniques include breathing, intonation and articulation. The styles used in singing *stambul II* were recetative or *rall*, *cengkok*, *luk*, *gregel*, *embat* and *nggandul*.

Keywords: *keroncong*, *Stambul II*, singing, style

1 INTRODUCTION

In this sophisticated era, art is very important in humans' lives. Without art, life would feel barren. A life without art narrows the horizon of knowledge or, generally speaking, life would be colorless. Music is a branch of art that is also very influential in humans' lives. The techniques of vocal production, melody, harmony, rhythm and tempo are meant to express the feelings or emotions felt by the creators. Music does not discriminate against age. Children and elderly people have the right to play music.

Keroncong music is one of the music genres in Indonesia. This music existed in the 17th century when the Portuguese settled in Batavia. Some people think that *keroncong* music is music of the elderly people and the young generation studying this music are considered "old school". *Keroncong* music has three types: original *keroncong*, *stambul I* and *II* and *langgam*. Based on the research observations, *stambul II* songs are optional songs that have a high level of difficulty for singing competitions.

In *keroncong* music competition, singers often face obstacles in performing *keroncong* songs within the *stambul II* style. The competition songs are standard songs that aim to make singers learn the songs earnestly. However, there are many singers who have not noticed that techniques in singing must first be mastered in order to perform the *stambul II* songs. Problems arise with singers who lack mastery of specific vocal techniques for breathing, intonation and articulation. Additionally, what has not been mastered are the singing style and the interpretation of the song performed. The singing style of *stambul II*, inspired by local Javanese songs are *cengkok*, *embat*, *gregel*, *luk* and *nggandul*. In this digital era, communication media does help people and yet new technology can also make people lazier. This can be seen from the fact that there are many *keroncong* singers who only imitate the songs from tapes, CDs and audio videos taken from the Internet.

In a previous study conducted via interviews one of the *keroncong* experts named Mrs. Hj. Sri Hartati mentioned that when performers sing the *stambul II* songs, singers should be singing while also understanding the style of singing *keroncong* songs and the

characteristics of performing the *stambul II* songs. However, singers generally lack vocal techniques for breathing, articulation, intonation, phrasing and expression. Other factors that created more problems in singing *stambul II* songs well and properly, is that singers did not rehearse with *keroncong* experts and singers did not want to read existing notations written by composers.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocal techniques generally refer to ways of producing sounds properly, so that the sounds produced sound clear, beautiful, melodious and sonorous. According to Suharto (1975), vocalizing is a human activity using vocal cords as a source of sounds (p. 1). Vocal art is the art of making sound in all activities using the human voice as a basic tool such as speaking, declaiming and dialogue delivery between role players in theater and film. The focus on vocal technique in this study is how to sing properly. A good singer needs vocal techniques that integrate proper breathing, intonation, articulation, resonance, body posture and improvisation. However, in singing *keroncong* songs, vocal techniques focus on breathing, intonation, articulation and expression. Technique is not a style because singing *keroncong* has characteristics of *cengkok*, *embat*, *gregel*, *luk* and *nggandul*. Based on the preceding discussion, it can be concluded that singing *keroncong* songs requires a vocal technique and singing style that fits the character of *keroncong* music.

3 MATERIAL & METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research method

The method used in this study is a qualitative research method with a qualitative descriptive type. Qualitative descriptive research requires an explanation of a person or phenomenon that occur without losing focus on the object being studied. Qualitative descriptive method is used to factually test a hypothesis related to its variables, phenomena or circumstances (Suharsimi, 1995, p. 310).

3.2 Time and place of the research

This research was conducted at Balaputradewa street No. 32, Brojonalan, Borobudur, Magelang Regency, the location where the Muntilan Putra Kasih Keroncong Orchestra conducts rehearsals. Rehearsals occurred every Wednesday starting at 08.00 local time from the beginning of February to March 2017.

3.3 Data source

The data sources were experts and singers who have mastered *stambul II* with the proper vocal style and technique.

3.4 Data collection techniques

The data was collected through observation, interviews and documentation.

3.5 Instrument

The research instrument was the researcher herself as qualitative research employs people as the instruments by which research is conducted.

3.6 Data analysis technique

The data analysis technique used in this study was performed in four steps: 1) analysing data collection; 2) data reduction; 3) data presentation; and 4) drawing conclusions, better known as data verification (Suprayogo, 2001, p. 192)

3.7 Validity of the data

To check the validity of the data, this research used the credibility criteria of the degree of validity which includes extension of the participation, perseverance, observation and triangulation (Moloeng, 2006, p. 327). Participation means that the researcher also participated as a singer in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra, while triangulation is a technique of validating the data by testing data credibility by examining the data from several sources.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results of the research in the muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih orchestra

The results of this research showed that the *stambul II* singing styles used by the singers were *rall*, *cengkok*, *luk*, *gregel*, *embat* and *nggandul*. The *stambul II* singing styles in this orchestra are common styles used by *keroncong* singers, especially the *stambul II* style. This is related to what was stated by one of the *keroncong* experts, Mrs. Hj Sri Hartati, during the interview conducted on 20 February 2017 that, "Singing the *stambul II* songs, as same as singing the original *keroncong* songs and *langgam* styles, uses *cengkok*, *luk*, *gregel*, *embat* and *nggandul* styles". The *stambul II* songs are different from original *keroncong* songs. For example, at the beginning of *stambul II* songs, the singer sings without being accompanied by any musical instruments after the introduction section is played by a solo guitar or violin player. This way of singing is known as *rall*. Based on the reviews, the researcher suggests that to properly sing *stambul II* songs, the singers in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra need to pay attention to the singing styles of the *keroncong* songs and know the characteristic of one of the *stambul II* styles that is called *rall*. *Rall* is one of the *stambul II* singing styles used in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra. In Western music, *rall* is known as *acapella* and is also called *recitative*. The term *recitative* is an expression by singers who sing and perform songs related to the nuances of song lyrics that are sung without any accompanying musical instruments. This statement is based on the interview with Mr. Hendyatno Hendro Sujongko in which he stated that, "*Rall* is singing a song without being accompanied by any musical instruments and is sung with the heart by comprehending fully on the meaning of the songs" (personal communication, 1 March 2017). Based on those reviews, the singers in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra sang the *stambul II* songs by using their hearts and by comprehending fully on the meaning of the songs without using any musical instruments. One of the *stambul II* songs known by many *keroncong* singers is called "Stambul Tinggal Kenangan". This piece is often sung by singers in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra. The song lyrics describe a situation through sad and sorrowful nuances about a broken-hearted person who thinks about someone who has left, leaving his/her loved one. Therefore, the expression of the singers' voices and their facial expressions should describe sadness and the song should be sung smoothly and sound flexible. The singers need proper breathing vocal technique before they begin to sing in order to complete the full sentence lyric and not cut it off so that the sound will be more intact. However, the singers in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra paid little attention to proper breathing technique so that the singers did not sing with *fermata* nor with proper breath inhalation. The beautiful vibration was not fully reached due to the lack of proper technique.

The singers in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra also delivered a great improvisation while singing the song "Stambul Tinggal Kenangan". The beginning of the song was given a touch of the *rall* style and sounded flexible so that listeners enjoyed the song and knew that singing "Stambul Tinggal Kenangan" requires strong vocal technique and a touch of

properly singing the *stambul II* style. In addition to the characteristic of *rall* in singing *stambul II* songs, the style used by the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra was the *cengkok* style. In the music there was also the movement of tones such as *cengkok*, tones that are known as ornaments of melodies. The movement of these tones is similar to *gruppetto* technique. The Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra singers gave a touch of *cengkok* style that was slightly different from *cengkok* in general. *Cengkok* is sung quickly but is still flexible and relaxed. In the *stambul II* songs, as in the original *keroncong* songs, not all phrases are given a touch of *cengkok*. Each song is usually only given one or two touches of *cengkok*. For singers in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra, *cengkok* shows the beauty of the songs performed. The beauty occurs when the singer has one note in one beat, but with a touch of *cengkok* singers are able to sing four notes quickly. *Cengkok* will not sound perfect if the singers do not give a touch of *cengkok* quickly and flexibly. If this *cengkok* tone is sung in a way that exceeds or is less than a $\frac{1}{2}$ tone, it will sound false and does not match with the instruments played. The strength of a *keroncong* singer is that he/she can carry a proper and flexible *cengkok*. The singers in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra attempted to sing *stambul II* songs with a *cengkok* style. However, they did not pay execute the proper vocal intonation technique, so that it made the song sound false. Additionally, the singers in the orchestra did not express their feelings in such a way so as to blend with the tempo of the songs that they sang. Furthermore, the *stambul* singing style used in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra was instead a touch of *luk* style. *Luk* is a style of singing that can be used to sing any kind of *keroncong* song. In Western music terms, *luk* is better known as a kind of legato or a continuous tone sung by being pulled or *slurred* before ascending to the main tone. Legato is a tone that is sung continuously (Suharto, 1975, p. 84). The following statement comes from the interview with Adi Nurcolis: “*Luk* is the previous tone that is sung again that to come up to its main tone, it is sung by being drawn” (personal communication, 24 February 2017). In the *stambul II* songs, *luk* is widely used because the drawn tone will beautify the *stambul II* songs with sad and rumbling nuances. In the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra, *luk* functions to beautify the songs and make it easier for the singers to reach the high interval tone. When the singers give a touch of *luk*, what must be considered is the accuracy of capturing the tone before coming up to the main tone. This is because the singers in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra often gave a touch of *luk* in the tone that was sung so that the tone produced sounds swerving from the music.

Beside *rall*, *cengkok* and *luk*, the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra singers also used *gregel*—another *stambul II* singing style. *Gregel* is a tone ornament that is similar to *cengkok* tone and is sung by lowering or increasing by one tone or a half tone. In Western music terms, *gregel* is a kind of musical ornamentation of a tone or that is similar with the upper mordent. In the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra, the style of *gregel* was mostly placed on the tone after the tone was given a touch of *luk*. The same thing was expressed by one of the *keroncong* singers, Hendyatno Hendro Sujongko: “*Gregel* is a word that is sung in three different tones quickly. These three tones are the original tone, the upper tone of the original tone, and the original tone (back to the original tone again)” (personal communication, 1 March 2017). *Gregel* in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra, is generally sung by reflecting the note on the main note quickly but still sounds flexible. *Gregel* is one of the styles that every *keroncong* singer must possess, that should be mastered. By mastering this singing style, the singer will beautify the *stambul II* songs. *Gregel* in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra also has a function to beautify songs.

The next style is *embat*, a way of singing *keroncong* in general. In the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra, the *embat* style is part of *stambul II* singing. *Embat* will be fully heard if the singers in the orchestra use proper breathing technique and requires the addition of vibrations after the final tone with a touch of *embat* style. However, in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra, several obstacles were observed in attempts to sing with *embat* style because there was a lack of attention toward proper vocal breathing technique. During an interview, Hj Sri Hartati noted that, “*Embat* is the style of singing that at the end of the song given pressure (being reflected) and a vibration. It requires proper breathing technique, and to make a good breath taking, the singers need to shorten some sentences” (personal

communication, 20 February 2017). In addition to vibrations, expressions and dynamics, a touch of *embat* style also beautifies the *stambul II* songs. The addition of this vibration will be beautiful when the singer's voice becomes smoother (*decrecendo*) and the duration of the tone is long.

Another *stambul II* singing style used in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra is *nggandul*. *Nggandul* is one of the characteristics of the *keroncong*. *Nggandul* style can be enjoyed if the singers have mastered and understood the style of singing *stambul II* by using their feeling and appreciation. If the singers have not mastered and understood the style of *nggandul*, then the song will sound weird and as if left behind by the actual tempo. This will lead listeners to conclude that the singers cannot sing the *stambul II* songs properly. *Nggandul* style in this orchestra functions to add the characteristic of *keroncong* itself that is identical to its delay in entering the tone or does not match with the first beat. The style of *nggandul* must be owned by *keroncong* singers in general, as *keroncong* songs will be more flexible if it is given a *nggandul* touch at a certain part in a song. This type of *keroncong* song is unsettling when singers start to sing, as it songs are not sung in the right beat and thus distinguishes *nggandul* from the other types of songs.

4.2 Discussion

The results of this research show that the singers used singing styles such as *cengkok*, *luk*, *gregel*, *embat* and *nggandul*. These singing styles are used to sing *keroncong* original songs, *stambul* and *langgam*. The singers in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra also used these styles while singing the *stambul II* songs. However, it was observed that the singers in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra have not yet mastered vocal techniques of proper breathing, intonation, articulation and expression. Additionally, the singers in this *keroncong* orchestra did not often pay attention to the tempo, feel and meaning of the songs they sang. Thus, while singing the songs, both the singers and the songs were not intertwined, not connected with one another. The *stambul II* songs would certainly sound beautiful and the meanings contained in the songs would be delivered, understood and well received by the listeners if the singers use proper vocal techniques. Proper technique would help singers to fully attain the *stambul II* singing styles of *rall*, *cengkok*, *luk*, *gregel*, *embat* and *nggandul*.

5 CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this observer-participant study of the *stambul II* singing style in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra, the following conclusions are made: the singers performed the *stambul II* songs in ways that are characteristic of the *stambul* song by using *rall* as well as other styles of singing *keroncong* songs—*cengkok*, *luk*, *gregel*, *embat* and *nggandul*. These singing styles are necessary and must be mastered by *keroncong* singers especially for *stambul II* songs. Proper technique would make the songs *ngroncong* or sounding like a rich *keroncong* song that is flexible. However, this research found that the singers in the Muntilan Keroncong Putra Kasih Orchestra have not yet paid attention to proper vocal techniques for effective breathing, intonation, articulation and expression. Overall, proper vocal technique training is needed in order to help the singers master the various *stambul II* singing styles.

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