

Blessing: Musical Composition and Collaborative Processes for a Contemporary Genre

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Abstract: The author's goal is to discuss *Blessing* Composition where the music composition is a collaboration with the theme of world music. *Blessing's* work uses the concept of *sound with your soul* where it is presented in collaboration between 3 composers from 2 countries who have different backgrounds, namely from France and Indonesia. *Blessing's* work also uses the concept of *on the spot*, where the melodies are played by improvised players using the G Major chord as the starting point during the show. Based on these chords by prioritizing *sound with your soul*, free harmonies are found that do not bind the players in playing melodies with various musical instruments and different techniques. *Blessing's* work is the result of a collaboration that prioritizes voice *with your soul* in an art performance. Observations were made during the show and the results of the show can be seen on the YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzxsUZyFt-Q>. *Blessing's* work was performed at the North Sumatra Jazz Festival in Collaboration with World Music on 28 July 2022 at the Nurdin Tampubolon Auditorium Building in Medan. The show is a collaboration between the French-Medan embassy and Universitas HKBP Nommensen Medan. *Blessing's* work is a composition that has the characteristics of each composer, where Erucakra with a jazz rock style through a guitar instrument, Junita Batubara has a contemporary style using various musical instruments, Duo Wegger with a Jazz fusion clarinet & saxophone style.

Keywords: Composer, music composition, world music, sound of your soul, on the spot, harmony.

INTRODUCTION

At this time we often see that art is a creativity that has expression. Art can also be described as 'abstract' which is difficult to assess because the parameters still include processes that use the medium as a vessel to have ideas or ideas, concepts, interpretations in a performance expression.

According to Irawati in Batubara, (2021: 1) says that form rather than art is based on the representation of an experience aesthetically which has integration of various transmission elements. This can be seen from the various art performances performed by artists with different backgrounds. We can also experience aesthetically by simply hearing sounds arranged in such a way as to produce harmony in the form of a musical composition.

An artist makes observations to create a high-value work of art where the work of art is by presenting a musical drama "Sleeping Beauty" for children with down syndrome (Batubara, 2019:174-175). He conducted a musical drama performance experiment with children with Down syndrome based on experiences accompanied by ideas and concepts as outlined in a performance medium. In this case the existence of works of art lies in the aspect of the artist as the creator of the work, the medium used and the recipient of the art.

Music is a harmonious combination of tones, vocals and instrumentals to express everything that is emotional. Along with the times, every composer has his own way of creating a piece of

music. Elements of musical composition are closely related to the idea of a work and have an important role in the creation of a piece of music. The composer arranges an idea that is owned and then compiled into a concept and developed into a complete composition through the process of creating music (Panggabean, 2022:19).

In the end, a piece of music will be realized from a long series of activities that start from an idea and then turn it into a concept to writing a composition using musical instruments as the medium. Composition in musicality in music creation can be traced to the concepts of structure, melody, rhythm, dynamics, and harmony which have implications for changes in musical expression (Sugiartha in Prakasih 2018: 114). Along with the times, musical compositions are always evolving, many instrumental music composers utilize modern technology to create innovative and complex sound effects through the sounds around them.

Contemporary is often interpreted as new music or contemporary music which creates a perception that any type of music made at this time can be called contemporary music (Mack in Ongko 2022: 133). Contemporary which is linked to the word music, actually does not explain the genre or genre or style of music, but rather explains the attitude or perspective of the artist in the concept and aesthetic value of his music which has contemporary values (Supiarza, 2016: 31)

The composition of *Blessing* is embodied in a contemporary composition. Contemporary has many meanings in it. The general opinion says that contemporary music is a work of thought which is a leap of ideas that sometimes goes beyond its own era which generally wants to break free from the confinement of the laws that bind it (Sudirga, 2020: 184). In addition, according to Prof. Dieter Mack, a composer, pianist and expert on Indonesian musical culture from the University of Freiburg, Germany, he stated that contemporary music is in the idiom of the western tradition, where the material is in the form of traditional music, but the techniques he composes use principles commonly known in western music and contemporary music originating from ethnic elements which can be said to be a revitalization of traditional music by way of beating with new techniques (Javid & Tanaka, 2017). With these different understandings, the author elaborates on various existing sources and concludes how contemporary composition is understood. Contemporary composition is a musical composition presenting new things that were not thought of before which brings freedom in creating, however, contemporary music has a clear and strong concept that refers to deeper innovations in music.

Names such as Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig Van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms are figures of contemporary world composers. Indonesia also has composers whose works work on contemporary music. One of them is Harry Roesli, this composer is not an ordinary musician. He gave birth to a contemporary music culture phenomenon that is distinct, communicative, and consistently radiates social criticism. He is able to creatively produce and present art communicatively. His works consistently raise social criticism in a straightforward manner in the nature of lenong theater music. Some of his well-known musical works include: "Hospital Music" (1979 and 1980 in Jakarta), "Parenthese", "Toothbrush Music" (1982 in Jakarta), Fish Opera, Salty, and Cockroach Opera. Another name that comes from Indonesia, I Nyoman Winda, Al Suwardi also specifically explores contemporary music. (blogspot: contemporary music: 2018: June: 11)

Contemporary composition has characteristics and characteristics, including (1) the use of sound sources that are not commonly used in musical compositions. (2) The sound source can be anything, it can be a musical instrument or an

object that produces sound, even though it is not a musical instrument (3) The processing of the musical work is freer. The use of vertical harmonies and parallel compositions is freer (freer). (4) Free use of modal, tonal, and atonal musical concepts. (5) Presenting new things that are unusual and have freedom from the prevailing musical rules. (6) has a complex rhythm.

Junita Batubara is an Indonesian female composer who has experience in creating works of various styles and genres. She is a permanent lecturer in the Department of Music at Universitas HKBP Nommensen, Medan. She has worked on several works, some of which are *Bersyukur*, *Opera Tonggo Raja*, *Alam Menyapa*, *Song of Bird*, *Destinasi*, *Aktivitas*, *Perenungan*, , *Tjong A Fie*, *Opera Anak Naburju*, *Opera Putri Tidur*, *Opera Vio*, *Opera Buteria dan Ladiffa*, *Drama Musikal Dream a Dream*, *Dialogue*, *Gerimis*, *Saudara-Saudara Inilah Cerita*, *Sun Rises*, *Rebawang Malim*, *Drama Musikal Roha Na Marpangkirimon*, *Persinggahan*, *Perempuan Tiga Zaman* and so on. As a composer, she has something unique in the process of creating his works, which always combines two cultures or more as a form of cross culture (result of interview, 5 April 2023). One of them is the composition work *Blessing* which displays three well-known composers playing contemporary music.

Erucakra Mahameru is a jazz musician, guitarist, arranger, producer, and composer, from Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. He initiated the presence of the North Sumatra Jazz Festival and the jazz band C-Man. He claims to be a musician with the flow of Neo Progressive Jazz. He received his music education from Berklee College of Music, Boston, United States of America and graduated in 1995 (interview with Erucakra Mahameru, July 27, 2022). Not only active in Medan and the archipelago, he has performed with several world jazz musicians in various festivals

The Weeger duo consisting of Bastien Weeger and Timothée Weeger. They are the winners of the Jazz Migration (a search event for French jazz musicians and improvised music organized by an association called the Association Jazz Croise). This duo carries elements of courage, poetry and emotion. Their original repertoire of compositions is jazz, traditional groove as well as classical and repetitive music (Idntimes: 2022:June:11).

North Sumatra Jazz Festival is a jazz music festival in North Sumatra which has been held

every year since 2011 in Medan, Indonesia. The event, which was initiated by Erucakra Mahameru with Waspada eMusic and supported by indiejazz Indonesia, featured musical groups from within and outside the country. The North Sumatra Jazz Festival is always present with its own concept design, which makes NSJF unique and different from other jazz festivals in the archipelago. This festival, the pride of the cities of Medan and North

Sumatra, is predicted to be the biggest jazz festival in the northern part of the island of Sumatra

Exactly entering its one decade old, the North Sumatra Jazz Festival presents European and Indonesian Jazz through the tour of French jazz musician "Duo Weeger" in Indonesia. The concert was held at the HKBP Nommensen University Auditorium, Medan City.



Figure 1: *Blessing* performance at the North Sumatra Jazz Festival 28 July 2022

Submission of compositional material is carried out by the composer in several stages. The first stage, namely by giving instructions to each player to play the musical instrument used based on the melody played by the synthesizer. This was done by way of general repetition where the meeting was held on July 28, 2022. The second stage, giving explanations to the musicians regarding the concept of world music works which uses sound with your soul more. What is meant by sound with your soul is how to produce melodies that are played with 'soul'. The third stage is holding the North Sumatra Jazz Festival where the composers as well as the musicians sound with your soul 'on the spot'.

Blessing is a piece of music packaged in a performance with an ensemble format. *Blessing* is interpreted in Indonesian, namely "Blessing". The author conducted an interview with one of the composers, namely Junita Batubara, where she got the idea for the work when she was experiencing a situation affected by Covid 19 (April 3, 2023). The creation of *Blessing*'s works had a positive impact on the special artists being able to bring in Duo Weeger from France to perform together through the North Sumatra Jazz Festival. As for what the composer does in *Blessing*'s work is to assemble the concept of world music by bringing each culture into the work. Junita Batubara with Erucakra Mahameru and Duo Weeger blend Indonesian and French culture. The uniqueness of this work is that the synthesizer instrument only plays one note (G-tone) then the guitar, saxophone, and clarinet each play various melodies that

produce harmony according to the interpretation of the composer who still uses sound with your soul. Even though each instrument is played, the harmony in the work does not create the impression of disharmony, giving rise to various harmonies that are in harmony with the melody being played in a 'flowing' manner.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Qualitative Research Methods can be interpreted as a research method based on the philosophy of positivism, used to research natural objects, where researchers are the key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out by triangulation combined with observation, interviews, documentation (Sugiyono 2019: 25). The results of qualitative research emphasize understanding meaning and constructing phenomena rather than generalizations (Sugiyono, 2019: 26). It is said to be qualitative because this research seeks to explain objects that are relevant to existing phenomena or problems

According to Batubara (2020: 122) the methodology for music composition is generally referred to as the 'creative process'. She said that the 'creative process' in composition can be processed by using the experience of the composer, through the surrounding sounds both from nature and the soundscape, then it becomes an idea. Based on experience and ideas, it can produce a work concept. Composition is basically an overall analysis of the entire musical structure.

In this composition the analysis is more emphasized on harmony review, so that the characteristics of the *Blessing* composition can be obtained. Elements of the structure of musical composition are motifs, themes, variations, improvisation. The musical character obtained basically functions to identify a composition, classify a particular musical composition (Faliqul 2019: 51)

The author also uses an ethnographic approach which is generally based on direct observation, observing players playing musical instruments, researching information and also asking questions to people. But what most distinguishes ethnography from other methodologies is the more actively assigned role of cognitive, observing, watching, viewing, gazing, researching. (Gobo, 2011: 15). The ethnography carried out by researchers in this article is one of the social methods to find out the existence of culture rather than composers. The researcher conducted interviews and observations of the composers and compositions of *Blessing* to obtain any cultural influences seen in the works. Data was also collected by means of audio and visual through YouTube, making scores/musical scores which were carried out by the author himself. The interviews in this study were to collect information from both the composer and the audience who attended the North Sumatra Jazz Festival regarding the composition of *Blessing*, as well as documentation of *Blessing* performances from the North Sumatra Jazz Festival. The author uses the Sound Of Bird methodology scheme by Batubara (2020: 122)

The researcher carried out the stages of research on the composition of *Blessing* by Junita Batubara, Erucakra & Duo Weeger" as follows: (1) Data Selection, carried out to select and summarize data according to research needs. (2) Data Classification, Data classification was carried out to compile basic data on criteria and distribution of musical instruments used (3) Data description, explaining *Blessing's* composition from the point of harmony (4) Interpretation, interpretation data seeks to find relationships between the facts found and provides a clear understanding of *Blessing's* composition (5) Conclusion, namely reaffirming briefly and concisely what was found from the previous discussions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Blessing's musical work is an instrumental contemporary work with the concept of 'on the spot' using free harmony. Submission of musical works during the performance has several stages. The first stage, the results obtained are a combination of the sounds of the musical instruments being played to produce a different 'sound color'. In the composition of *Blessing*, the freedom to play the melody is prioritized. The second stage, this is done in different ways according to the musical instrument being played and the technique of playing the instrument. The third stage, a combination of several instruments presented with the concept of world music with sound with your soul that gets the listener's attention on the combination of the two cultures in one composition.

The instruments used in this composition are the Synthesizer as the drone in this work, the Soprano Saxophone as the main melody, the Clarinet as the main melody, Electric Guitar, Singing Bowl, Sound of Bird from Bamboo, and Farmer Bell where these instruments act as melodic inserts. has its own characteristics in creating harmony. Here are the names of the musicians of each instrument in the composition of the *Blessing*

1. Drone Synthesizer : Junita Batubara
2. Soprano Saxophone : Bastien Weeger
3. Clarinet : Timothee Weeger
4. Electric guitar: Erucakra Mahameru
5. Singing Bowl: Junita Batubara
6. Sound of Bird from Bamboo : Junita Batubara
7. Farmer Bells: Junita Batubara

The duration of *Blessing's* work is 8 minutes 44 seconds, apart from that, *Blessing's* work also experiences several changes in tempo. There are melodic and harmony variations in each part of the song to support.

The author will divide the major parts of *Blessing's* work and then the author reviews the elements of music, namely: (1). Rhythm, (2). Melody, (3). Harmony.

Rhythm is a form of a certain arrangement of long or short sounds and silence. Each form of song has rhythm patterns. The rhythm of a song consists of several rhythm patterns. Rhythm patterns can be the same or in the form of repetition or can also be slightly different or even very different (Tim Kemdikbud, 2018: 100).

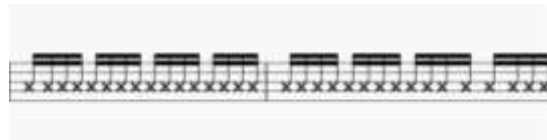


Figure 2: One of the rhythmic patterns in the *Blessing* Composition

The picture above shows that there is a rhythm pattern that is played according to the long or short sound or silence. The rhythm played in the figure is a sixteenth note.

Melody is a series of tones (sounds with regular vibrations) that sound sequentially rhythmically and express an idea. Melody is also called a string of single notes which are known as a whole unit (Ministry of Education and Culture Team, 2018: 104)

Actually, melodies are easier to recognize than to define. A melody has a beginning, a movement of notes, and an end. Melody has direction, shape,

and continuity. The movement up and down the melodic notes creates a sense of tension and resolution.

Melodies that move in small intervals are called stepping melodies, while those that move in large intervals are called jumping melodies. Besides rising and falling in the form of steps and jumps, melodies can also be in the form of repetition of the same notes. Some of the elements in the elements of the melody, among others: scales, tone systems, tone types, tone properties, key notes, and tone intervals.



Figure 3: Parts of a melodic piece in a *Blessing* Composition

The melodic pattern in the picture above includes small intervals with the movement of the melody in steps.

Harmony or chorus is the sound of a song or musical game that uses two or more tones, which differ in pitch and we hear simultaneously. The basis of this harmony is a triad or chord. Chord is one of the elements of music while other elements such as kaden and interval.

A tritone or chord is the sound of a combination of three tones that are formed from one of the tones with a tert note and its quinn, or from one of the notes with its terts and the next terts of a new note, so it is also said to be terts in a row. Chords are numbered with Roman numerals according to the rank of the root note in the scale. Large roman numerals denote major triads/chords and lower roman numerals denote minor triads/chords.



Figure 4: Harmony in *Blessing* Composition

The harmonies of G Major are 4 notes formed from regular intervals of terts and quints. So the G Major chord in the picture above is an open harmony. The Soprano Saxophone plays melodic accompaniment to the G Major chord harmonies, widening the harmonies played using two or more different tones.

Musical structure is the arrangement or relationship of a musical element in a piece of music to produce a meaningful composition. The author describes the structure of the *Blessing* song with three parts, namely the opening, content and closing.



Figure 5: Notation of the opening *Blessing*

The notation above is the opening (introduction to the song) in which the synthesizer acts as a drone that directs or maintains (guide) the flow of the harmony game which will soon be played by several instruments in this performance. The

synthesizer in this composition plays the open chord of the G chord for one measure and the soprano saxophone which is the only lead melody in the opening section enters to play harmony on the second beat.

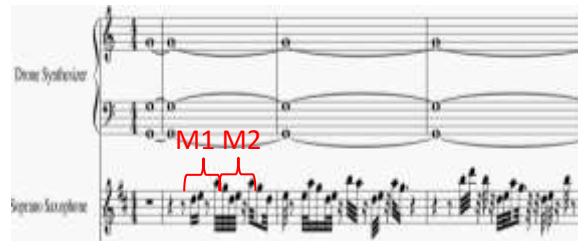


Figure 6: Harmony motifs from the opening *Blessing*

There is a motif on the opening part of the soprano saxophone instrument which is marked as "M1 = Motif One", "M2 = Motif Two". Motif is the smallest part of a song sentence, either in the form of words, syllables, or clauses that can be developed as in literature (Prier, 2013). The soprano saxophone plays the repetition motif,

which is meant to be a direct repetition without changing the motif, interval, or pitch value of the previous motif. In the picture it is very clear that there is a repetition motive. Repeated notes do not change either the interval or the note value. The repetition of these motifs occurs in the same measure.



Figure 7: Notation of the opening *Blessing* with the inclusion of clarinet instruments

Furthermore, at 01:40 minutes there is the development of a harmony pattern. This sentence is an extension of the previous sentence. In this sentence the clarinet instrument is played as an addition to the melodic movement pattern as well as harmony. The addition of the clarinet instrument makes this section a three-voice harmony, although not harmonies from chord play but from melodies between the synthesizer, soprano saxophone, and clarinet. The soprano

saxophone is still the main melody and the clarinet is used as an insert, so that the rhythmic pattern of the clarinet is seen only playing quarter notes or eighth notes. The triling game on the clarinet melody pattern is used as an ornament to create a joyful but calm atmosphere. And the staccato technique on the soprano saxophone to emphasize the notes played on the first and fourth beats in each measure for two measures.



Figure 8: Notation of *Blessing* contents

Part changes are seen when the inclusion of the singing bowl instrument is played. There is a change in rhythm and atmosphere in this section. When the singing bowl instrument is struck it gives the impression of depth and breadth. Singing bowls are hit in a free rhythm but run slowly. At one point, the singing bowl was also played by wiping it thoroughly on the edge of the singing bowl. The electric guitar instrument enters on the third beat and finds that there is a reversal motif which is marked as M1 in Figure 5. The reversal motif is that each rising interval is now a descending interval, and each interval in the motif

goes down/down, in reversal it will be directed to go up /go on. Processing of motifs by way of reversal is also found in electric guitar instruments in the contents of *Blessing's* composition. Note the M1 marking in figure 5, the electric guitar plays up quint intervals from D4 to A4, then again A4 is played on sixteenth notes followed by legato and the electric guitar plays down quart intervals from G4 to D4. In this section the soprano saxophone instrument gives full space to the singing bowl to be played so that the soprano saxophone only plays full notes and also plays legato techniques.



Figure 9: Notation of the sound of bird from bamboo instrument

The uniqueness of *Blessing's* composition is the combination of several world music instruments which are presented as a composition in the show with the concept of 'on the spot' to become contemporary music. And this is also the hallmark of Junita Batubara as a composer in this composition and the previous compositions. It is clear that the sound of birds from bamboo is included as part of the composition of the *Blessing*. With the inclusion of the sound of bird instrument, it gives a different sound color that is combined with other instruments.

In this section, the sound of birds provides calm on the emotional aspect. The sound of bird instrument plays solo without any other instrument accompaniment. Not too many notes are played, but with different rhythms it gives variety to the melody. In the early part, the sound of bird instrument, the D# 4 note is played in 2 beats and switches to the F# 4 tone with the previous grace note ornament on the E4 tone. The image below will show the variations of the melody played by the sound of bird from bamboo.

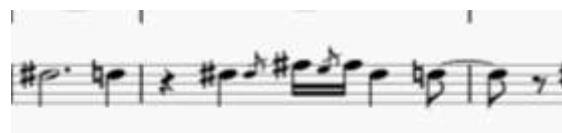


Figure 10: Variation of the 1st melody from the sound of bird from bamboo instrument

Figure 6 is the original melody from the sound of bird, and the picture above is a variation of the first melody. The second variation also begins with the note D# 4 with three beats, but this variation does not continue with the grace note and the notes are

notated one sixteenth. The note continues with D4 and rests for one beat then the melody continues with a grace note followed by a sixteenth note. After that the quarter note D#4 covers the melodic variations of this section.



Figure 11: Variation of the 2 melodies of the sound of bird from bamboo instrument

Figure 8 is also a different variation from the previous variation. In this variation are pieces of rhythm from the original variation. The grace note which is followed by D# 4 with the one sixteenth

note experiences a break in its rhythm pattern, so that it is repeated twice with the same note and note in this variation.



Figure 12: Variation of the 3 melodies of the sound of bird from bamboo instrument

This section is a repetition that is exactly the same as the original melody, but this occurs after going through the 2 previous variations so that it is still

said to be a variation even though it experiences the exact same repetition as the original melody.



Figure 13: Variations of the 4 melodies of the sound of bird from bamboo instrument

This fourth variation also experienced a break in the rhythm pattern. D#4 is played with a single beat which is the first beat in this measure (compare with figure 8). After that, the grace note ornament E4 is followed by D# 4 with the one-sixteenth notation with a half-beat value which

experiences a rhythm pattern break from the original melody and returns D# 4 with a one-beat value, the continuation of the half-beat rhythm break is completed on beat 2 on the up beat. Then this variation is closed with a 1 tap D4 tone.



Figure 14: Farmer Bells Instrument

In this section there is a change in tempo, so the tempo is accelerated but still in the same count. Farmer bells are played by shaking them in their hands, so that the bells and bells touch each other which produces sound. Farmer bells played the rhythm, which the writer made in quarter notes.

the next two measures. In this section farmer bell plays the first 3 beats with an accelerated tempo. The soprano saxophone enters on the fourth beat with the notes B3, A3, F3, and D3 on the soprano saxophone with the rhythm of the sixteenth note. The next measure also experiences the exact same repetition, and on the fourth beat the clarinet responds to the accompaniment of the soprano saxophone with the notes C4, F4, and A4 on clarinet.

The soprano saxophone and clarinet shouted each other in the delivery of the melody. In figure 11 the soprano saxophone precedes to fill in the melody for two measures and is accompanied for



Figure 15: Soprano Saxophone and Clarinet Harmony

The figure above is the final part of the second part of the *Blessing* composition. This section is the climax of the show. The soprano saxophone plays triads in the thirty-second note with rising and falling intervals. C4 drops to B3 and steps down second intervals to the note A3 and transitions to the next rhythm stepping up at second intervals back to the note B3 on soprano saxophone.

As with the clarinet instrument, the clarinet is also played with a thirty-second rhythm notation, but what distinguishes it from the soprano saxophone is that the clarinet is played with a triplet. The triplet starts on F#4 and steps down to E4 and then E4 has an interval ending to C4 on the clarinet. And the clarinet does not have an upward transition like the soprano saxophone, the clarinet immediately repeats the triplet which is played 3 beats afterwards with a thirty-second note rhythm.



Figure 16: The closing part of the *Blessing* composition

This section is the end so that the melodies seem calm with 4 instruments being played, namely the soprano saxophone, clarinet, electric guitar, and synthesizer as a drone. The ending is again guided by synthesizers playing the open harmonies of the G chord. The clarinet instrument plays notes using the growl technique as a dynamic to create a more cheerful atmosphere.

CONCLUSION

Blessing's work is one of the musical compositions that has its trademark, namely sound with your soul where the musicians interact with each other and are able to feel togetherness without realizing it has its own harmony. *Blessing* uses the concept of world music works. In its presentation, the musical work is presented with the concept of 'on the spot' which only a few moments receives direction and concepts regarding the parts of the work both in terms of melody, motive, changes in tempo and rhythm. In the performance, this piece

of music is presented with several types of world and traditional instruments, such as picking, blowing, hitting, so that this combination is very much in line with the theme of the North Sumatra Jazz Festival, namely, "In Collaboration with World Music" on July 28, 2022.

The writer finds that in this work there are three major parts of the musical work of *Blessing*, namely the opening, content, and closing. This work is 8 minutes 44 seconds long. *Blessing* uses only one chord, namely the open G chord. This piece of music is also played with several tempo changes, mood swings, difficult harmonic intensity.

Blessing's music is a contemporary piece of music with a world music concept where all the performers apply sound with your soul and are performed 'on the spot'. The writer also finds free form in the work, unlike other works which have 1 part, 2 part or 3 part form, but the writer also sees

the free form of harmony and is not bound to the open G Chord. In *Blessing's* work as a whole, he plays melodies according to the wishes of the performers but still adheres to world music which uses the concept of sound with your soul in an 'on the spot' manner which produces unexpected harmonies from the musicians during the performance. From the author's observation of *Blessing's* work, it is a large work that has an artistic aesthetic that depicts gratitude for being able to overcome difficult times due to the impact of Covid 19. This also proves that life experience can be an inspiration/idea/idea in creating a work of art. where it is poured into a concept that is realized in a show.

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