



CENTER FOR WORLD MUSIC

AND RELATED ARTS



Rizaldi Siagian

Rizaldi Siagian taught and performed Sumatran drumming for the Center for World Music from 1983 to 1984. He is a performer, composer, and ethnomusicologist from Medan in North Sumatra, Indonesia. He played drums and guitar, and also sang in urban pop groups in the late 1960s, then became interested in traditional Sumatran music. He studied at the University of North Sumatra (B.A., 1982) and San Diego State University (M.A., 1985, with a thesis on South Indian singing), after which he returned to Indonesia to head the ethnomusicology program at the University of North Sumatra (*Universitas Sumatera Utara*) in the capital city of Medan.

As a performer, Rizaldi has participated in various independent music groups, performing at London's Royal Albert Hall with the group *Ansambel Bukit Barisan* (1981) and directing a performance at the National Palace in Jakarta in 1989. In 1987 he served as artistic director for a performance of North Sumatran music at the Cultural Festival Celebration of North Sumatra, both in Indonesia and in The Hague. In 1991 he was engaged to lead a group of Batak musicians from the Lake Toba area of North Sumatra on a tour of the United States as part of a nation-wide "Festival of Indonesia."

As a composer, Rizaldi was initially active as an arranger of popular music (1970–80). Later, in 1986, he began composing works that combined traditional and modern musical elements, intending to reintegrate North Sumatran traditional instruments into the musical life of North Sumatra and Indonesia as a whole. An example of such compositional "conservation" is his resurrection of a plucked lute (*gambus*), as in his "Gambus Menjelang Magrib" for gambus, voice, frame drum, harmonium, and violin. He also composed "Gambus Kehendak in 7" and "Gambus Binai," both of which are for gambus, Malaysian drum, taganing, gong, lonceng, harmonium, violin, hasapi, tube zither, and voice. One other composition is "Lebah," a dance accompaniment for tube zither, drum, shawm, slit drum, cymbal, and voice.