



# **Stunning Males and Powerful Females: Gender and Tradition in East Javanese Dance (New Perspectives on Gender in Music)**

*Christina Sunardi*

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In east Javanese dance traditions like Beskalan and Ngremo, musicians and dancers negotiate gender through performances where males embody femininity and females embody masculinity.

Christina Sunardi ventures into the regency of Malang in east Java to study and perform with dancers. Through formal interviews and casual conversation, Sunardi learns about their lives and art. Her work shows how performers continually transform dance traditions to negotiate, and renegotiate, the boundaries of gender and sex--sometimes reinforcing lines of demarcation, sometimes transgressing them, and sometimes doing both simultaneously. But Sunardi's investigation moves beyond performance. It expands notions of the spiritual power associated with female bodies and feminine behavior, and the ways women, men, and waria (male-to-female transvestites) access the magnetic power of femaleness.

A journey into understudied regions and ideas, *Stunning Males and Powerful Females* reveals how performances seemingly fixed by tradition are instead dynamic environments for cultural negotiation and change surrounding questions of sex and gender.



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