



**Dance** One of the key artforms associated with gamelan is dance. A dance tells a story. It could be about one person or many.

Here we have images of the Ramyana and Bedoya.



Unknown Author, licensed under [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)



Sometimes the story is so stylised and refined it's not obvious what is happening. The image on the right is about a war.

Balinese dance is rooted in Hindu traditions and many dances have a religious meaning. In Java, which is now predominantly Muslim, the dances have changed to reflect this. There is still a lot of spirituality in both traditions, many dancers believe they embody the spirit of the character when they are dance. Some believe powerful spirits can possess the dancer if they have not carried out the correct procedures to protect themselves. Dancers are very respectful of the characters, and they dance and pray or meditate before dancing. Some dancers have their masks blessed by a priest for extra protection.

### Masks

Sometimes dancers wear masks made of carved wood. If the dancer is not required to sing or speak (examples 1 and 2) the mask is held on with a small leather strap held between the teeth. If the role is a speaking/singing part, the mask is designed to keep the mouth clear, (examples 3 and 4).



#### 1. Klånå

A king whose story centers around his obsession with a princess. His dance movements reflect his character with large steps and florid arm gestures

An interesting note about Klånå's dance, the performer begins the dance as themselves, they enter maskless. They then put on the mask and 'become' Klånå.

#### 2. Panji

A king who is betrothed to the princess with whom Klånå is obsessed. This dancer's movements are more refined, with small steps and slower movements, the arms are kept closer to the body.



#### 3. Bagong and Bondres

Normally a lighthearted counterpoint to the darker elements of the main story. They tell jokes and make requests for the musicians to play popular songs. Bagong is seen as innocent or naive and therefore can ask difficult questions and make observations that a more refined character would not be able to do.

Bondres has a constantly runny nose (the two dots under his nose), poor eyesight and is also a bit deaf. He tells jokes and is supposed to offer spiritual advice but isn't very good at it!

