

The Creative Process and Melodic Structure Analysis of Mahalini's Song *Sial*, Mawang's Version

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Article Details	ABSTRACT
Article History Received mm dd, yyyy Revised mm dd, yyyy Accepted mm dd, yyyy	This study aims to describe Mawang's creative process in arranging the song "Sial" and to analyze its melodic structure. The research used qualitative methods, including observation, online interviews via WhatsApp video calls, and document analysis. Mawang took a creative approach by listening to the original version of the song in depth and developing musical ideas spontaneously, without altering its structure, arrangement, or musical elements, as a form of respect for Mahalini's work. The production process involved simultaneous recording of vocals and instruments, followed by mixing and mastering. The song's melodic structure consists of Verse I, Pre-Chorus, Chorus, Verse II, Pre-Chorus, Chorus, Bridge, and Coda. Analysis of the melodic motifs reveals four in the Verse section, two in the Pre-Chorus, five in the Chorus, four in the Bridge, and five in the Coda. These motifs involve literal repetition techniques, ascending and descending sequences, and augmentation. This study shows that the creative process is an important medium for developing ideas for unique and diverse arrangements.
Keywords Review Arrangement Structure Song Melody	
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1. INTRODUCTION

Music in the present day can be classified into various genres based on its shared characteristics. In the realm of art, not every form of expression can be called a work of art if it does not contain aesthetic value. This is because art is essentially a creation arising from a combination of human intellect, reason, and emotion (Widhyatama, 2012). A song is a musical work that combines melody, harmony, rhythm, and lyrics to convey a message verbally and emotionally. In lyrics, as explained by Suharto (2006), there is a non-musical power that gives meaning and a deep impression to a song. The development of the music industry worldwide and technological advances have made songs from various countries accessible to people in other countries, so that song enthusiasts are no longer limited to the country where the song was created (Yanti, 2024). Lyrics that are easy to remember and meaningful enrich the listening experience, making songs a communicative and emotional medium of expression. Songs can be understood as a form of text expressed through singing. This work is rooted in written compositions presented in auditory form with musical accompaniment (Ifadah and Aimah in Angwidya et al., 2017). As times have changed, the function of songs has shifted from traditional entertainment and local cultural values to a global medium, thanks to digital technology and streaming platforms. Modern arrangements are now complex and influenced by international genres such as pop, rock, hip-hop, and electronic. Technologies such as auto-tune and digital effects give new color to song production, while social media accelerates distribution and makes songs go viral quickly.

The song "*Sial*" by Mahalini was released on January 23, 2023, and immediately gained popularity among teenagers. The song went viral on platforms such as TikTok and topped the charts on Spotify and YouTube thanks to its melancholic lyrics that express disappointment in painful love (Safiah, 2023). With a composition written by Andmesh Kamaleng, Mahalini, and Mohammed Kamga, this song features powerful melodies and a strong emotional message. An interesting phenomenon occurred when independent musician Mawang (Ridwan Mawang Sanja Irawan) released a cover version of "*Sial*" on November 16, 2023. His

version features a 1990s-style arrangement—soft, calm, and experimental—creating a distinct character from the original. Within the first eight days, the video was viewed 288,000 times and made it onto YouTube's trending list, sparking reactions from netizens such as: "I forgot the original song... this version is so gentle." Some reviews noted that Mawang's interpretation evoked *the vibes* of alternative rock or 90s indie music, adding a new atmosphere to the melody structure of "Sial."

Creativity refers to an individual's capacity to generate new ideas that are relevant and valuable. A creative attitude is reflected in a tendency to continuously explore new possibilities, while innovation is the ability to implement creative ideas into real solutions. Thus, creativity that is not followed by innovation will lose its effectiveness (Suwahyono et al., 2023). The creative process can be understood as a series of stages individuals go through in producing original new works, drawing on ideas they discover independently. This stage allows for exploration of various objects around them, thereby bringing forth creativity as an essential element in creation. In the context of choreography, creativity begins with an idea that is then developed independently, with honesty and discipline, resulting in a complete creative process (Riswanto, 2022). The term form is understood as the structure, shape, system, or appearance that is displayed.

Meanwhile, structure refers to the arrangement and interrelationship of musical elements in a song that form a meaningful composition. Analysis of each part is conducted by considering aspects of theme, harmony, and dynamic markings. The term form is understood as a structure, shape, system, or appearance that is displayed (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia. Meanwhile, structure refers to the arrangement and interrelationship between musical elements in a song that form a meaningful composition. Analysis of each part is carried out by considering the themes, harmony, and dynamic markings.

The main difference between the Mawang version and the original lies in the creative approach: Mawang adapts the melody and tempo, introducing new harmonies with a touch of rock or simple ambient instruments. This transformation allows the lyrics to remain dominant while the melody is perceived as darker or more introspective. This phenomenon proves the flexibility of a song when interpreted by different musicians. The new arrangement paves the way for a unique listening experience, while also providing insight into the creative process and melodic structure. Therefore, your research, which reviews Mawang's creative process in arranging Sial and analyzes its melodic structure, is highly relevant to the literature on arrangement and Indonesian popular music theory.

The first relevant previous study is "Analysis of Arrangement and Creative Process in the Song' Dan Semua Yang Tertinggal' by the Music Group Zombies Daylight" by Muhammad Faris Febrianto in the form of a thesis in 2024, Music Arts Study Program, Faculty of Language and Arts, Surabaya State University. The second relevant previous study is "The Creative Process in the Creation of Songs Based on the Vision and Mission of the Regency" by Mohamad Yusuf Wiradiredja, published in the Indonesian Institute of Arts and Culture (ISBI) journal in 2015 (Faris Febrianto, 2023). The second previous study was a journal article entitled "The Creative Process in Creating Songs Based on the Vision and Mission of the Regency," conducted by Mohamad Yusuf Wiradiredja in 2015, at the Institute of Arts and Culture of Indonesia (ISBI) Bandung (Wiradiredja, 2015).

The theory used in this research is Graham Wallas' Theory of the Creative Process. Graham Wallas' theory of the creative process was used to map the concrete stages Mawang followed when arranging the song Sial. First, Preparation is operationalized through gathering information and gaining a deep understanding of the original version of the song, including its melodic structure, rhythm, and other musical elements (Preparation involves gathering information and analyzing the material). The Incubation stage is implemented by allowing creative distance, such as a pause for reflection after listening to the song, so that musical ideas can emerge spontaneously from the subconscious. The Illumination stage occurs when Mawang has an "aha" moment—new motifs or melody variations emerge from integrating the previous processes. Finally, **Verification** is marked by the selection of the best motifs, simultaneous recording of vocals and instruments, and a mixing and mastering process that refines the final arrangement (testing and refining ideas into the final form).

Thus, each stage of Wallas' creativity is operationalized as a systematic set of steps that are isolative yet interrelated: from material deepening to recording and final polishing, allowing the study to explain in detail how Mawang moves and blends across the phases of creativity in producing creative arrangements that respect the original work.

The second theory is from the theory of Melody Science proposed by, and Pop Song Structure by (Davidson & Davidson, 1996) Melody is considered the core or essence of a musical work, as stated in Melody plays a fundamental role as the "soul of music" that is capable of evoking unique emotional appeal. The beauty of melody can be immediately recognized through hearing, even though its power to stir emotions is difficult to explain rationally. Dieter Mack, in his book Ilmu Melodi (The Science of Melody), explains that melody

theory is something very elementary (basic) and essential, so various scientific formulations about melody as a fundamental element of music theory must be developed first. A motif is a basic pattern in music that can be a series of rhythms, a melody, or a combination of both, in a relatively short measure, and has its own musical meaning (Jamalus, 1988). According to Prier (SJ, 2011), a motif is a piece of music or a collection of notes that form a complete unit and convey intrinsic meaning. According to Ralf von Appen and Markus Frei-Hauenschild (Appen & Frei-Hauenschild, 2015), most popular music can be classified into one of the following three models.

2. METHOD

In this thesis research, the researcher applied a qualitative research method. This approach focuses on describing the circumstances, characteristics, or essence of a particular phenomenon, as well as the values attached to an object. The essence of qualitative research lies in the meaning of a phenomenon in its natural context. In addition, qualitative research aims to discover concepts and develop knowledge, and even formulate new theories. The descriptive qualitative approach is a research model that aims to describe, discover, or solve problems by measuring the quality of the research subject in a systematic, factual, and accurate manner (Hakim, 2023). The object of this research is the song "Sial Aransemen Mawang." This research uses a qualitative approach, which focuses on non-numerical data. The data collected came from sources such as manuscripts, interview results, field notes, personal documents, memos, and other official documents. (Sugiyono, 2022) This research was conducted in real conditions without changing or intervening in the ongoing situation. The researcher acted as a key source who directly observed the YouTube videos. (describes the research subject as an informant, which means a person in the research setting who is used to provide information about the situation and conditions of the research setting. According to Sugiyono (2022), the research object is a scientific target for obtaining data with specific purposes and uses, and it is objective, valid, and reliable.

Data collection techniques are a crucial stage in research because the essence of research lies in data acquisition (Suryani et al., 2020). The purpose of applying these techniques is to obtain valid, accurate, and reliable data, ensuring the research results and conclusions have a high level of validity. Data collection techniques in this study were carried out in three ways: observation, interviews, and documentation (Dewi et al., 2019).

An interview is a form of interaction or communication conducted to obtain information through a question-and-answer session between the researcher and the informant or research subject. According to Esterberg (in Wiradiredja, 2015), interviews are divided into three types, namely: a) Structured Interviews, b) Semi-Structured Interviews, and c) Unstructured Interviews. In relation to this study, the researcher used a semi-structured interview technique. This type of interview falls into the category of *in-depth interviews*, which are more flexible than structured interviews. The primary purpose of using semi-structured interviews is to explore issues more openly, so that informants can express their views and ideas freely. During the interview process, the researcher listened carefully and recorded all information provided by the informants. To ensure the data in this qualitative study are scientifically valid, it is necessary to test their validity (Ardiansyah, 2022). Data validity testing in this study was conducted using the triangulation method. The forms of triangulation used include source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation.

3. RESULT

The Creative Process of Mawang in Arranging the Song Sial

According to Banoe (2003), arrangement is understood as the composition of a song for an orchestra or a musical group, either in vocal or instrumental form. In the realm of music, arrangement represents the process of structuring and developing compositions, melodies, or songs into new forms that are richer in nuance and character through the creativity of an arranger. This process can be applied to a range of media, from solo instruments to musical ensembles, choirs, and orchestras. To achieve optimal arrangement results, mastery of theoretical music concepts is required, such as melody, pitch, intervals, harmony and chords, tempo, rhythm, and modulation. Mawang, whose full name is Ridwan Mawang Sanja Irawan, a 2015 graduate of ISBI Bandung's Karawitan program, successfully attracted public attention through his unique version of Mahalini's song "Sial," which he rearranged. Based on Graham's (1926) theory of the creative process, which consists of four stages—Preparation, incubation, illumination, and Verification—Mawang's creative process began with in-depth musical exploration. He listened to the original version of the song on digital platforms, drawing on pop, alternative, and traditional Indonesian music genres. His creative process also involves spontaneity, as he shared in a personal communication that he immediately composes the melody, records the vocals and music, and then continues the mixing and mastering process independently. Mawang's extensive musical experience, from arranging previous songs to performing on various stages, enriches the incubation

stage within him, where ideas develop indirectly to form a mature foundation for creativity. The home studio serves as a space for reflection and an idea laboratory for Mawang to refine his distinctive, emotionally charged musical concepts.

The illumination stage was marked by the emergence of the main idea in the arrangement of the song "Sial," which differed from the original version, especially in the vocal character, which was altered to give it a new color without altering the musical structure. Positive responses from his followers on social media encouraged him to produce a full version as a video clip and upload it to YouTube. Although he did not make significant changes to the song's basic harmony, Mawang still gave it a different feel through his vocal interpretation. In the verification stage, he critically evaluated the arrangement results, refining technical details such as tempo and dynamics during mixing and mastering using digital audio software (DAW). The entire process was carried out independently without involving other producers or musicians, demonstrating an authentic creative approach. The final reflection on the work was done by listening to the final result repeatedly to ensure artistic quality in line with his vision. This creative process reflects the integration of conscious exploration, subconscious spontaneity, and commitment to the authenticity of the work as a unique and artistically valuable expression of self.

Melodic Structure of the Song Sial Aransemen Mawang

a. Verse section I (A)

The *verse* section of a song with vocals generally conveys the song's story or message. Typically, songs with vocals have two or more *verses*. This section usually leads to the *pre-chorus* or directly to the *Chorus*. In song structure, *verses* are often denoted by the letter "A." (Harrison, 2009).

Image1 . Melody notation for verse 1

Doc by: Farika, 2025

The verse I section is written in 4/4 time with an *Allegro* tempo, creating a fast, energetic, and expressive musical character that aligns with the emotional tone of the song's lyrics. In verse 1, which consists of 16 bars, there are two phrases: the question phrase (bars 9–16), coded *a*, and the answer phrase (bars 17–24), coded *a'*. The question phrase contains two main motifs: motif *m*, the basic motif, and *m1*, a repetition with variations in rhythm and melody. This section shows characteristic melodies in the form of short, repetitive patterns that are developed, as well as a dominance of *stepwise* movement with occasional small leaps to express emotion. The answer phrase includes motifs *m2* and *m3*, with motif *m2* being a variation of the previous motif, and motif *m3* providing contrast through a descending sequence at the end of the phrase. The melodic direction in the answer phrase tends to ascend to build intensity, while rising and falling dynamics reflect the emotional nuances of the lyrics, such as regret or disappointment. The rhythm, a combination of eighth and quarter notes, further strengthens the overall musical expression, making the melodic structure of the verse feel lively and communicative.

b. Pre-Chorus (B)

The *pre-chorus* is a transitional part in the song structure that serves as a bridge between the verse and the Chorus. This part contributes to building musical intensity and energy before reaching its peak in the Chorus. In the context of song form, the pre-chorus is often labeled "B".



Image2 . Pre-Chorus

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The pre-chorus consists of seven bars with two phrases: the question phrase (bars 25–28) and the answer phrase (bars 29–31), which contain motifs b and b1. The question phrase is marked by triplets that give an emotional, urgent impression, with an ascending and then descending melody that depicts regret. The answer phrase repeats the triplet pattern in "tak kan ku" (I will not), maintaining rhythmic consistency, and closes with a descending melody for emphasis. The melody is dominated by stepwise motion, feeling lyrical and natural, with a slight upward leap for emotional emphasis. Triplets and light syncopation add expression and tension. The melody rises and falls dramatically, peaking at "terima cinta" (accept love) and falling at "sesaatmu" (your moment) as a form of firm rejection.

c. Chorus

The Chorus is a repetition of the song using variations. For example, from the form A A B A, it becomes A A' B A, and so on.



Image3 . Chorus

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The chorus section consists of 20 bars and modulates from C major (pre-chorus) to A major. The question phrase (bars 32–40) is coded c, and the answer phrase (bars 41–51) is coded c'. In the motif, c consists of motifs f and f1, where f is the main motif, and f1 is its variation. The c' phrase contains the f2 motif (a repetition of the f motif), as well as f3 and f4 as developments of f1 that vary at the end. Syncopation is used in bars 33–34, 36, and 48–50, and legato is used in bars 38, 40, 44, and 51, which adds emotional nuance. The melody starts flat, then rises, the middle section is undulating, and the ending is emotionally intense, especially in the repetition of "I will not accept your fleeting love." The rhythm pattern alternates between long and short notes, as well as triplets, as in "without a single reason," which gives an urgent impression. The stepwise dominant intervals make it easy to sing, with a few small leaps for emotional emphasis, creating a strong and memorable chorus.

d. Verse II (A)



Image4 . Verse II

Doc by: Farika, 2025

Verse 2 has 8 bars starting with the lyrics "seandainya" (if). Verse 2 is a literal repetition of section A or verse 1 and is coded A', which is a repetition of the response phrase (a') of verse I, returning to the original key of C major. There is also a difference in the beat between verse 1, which is 1/8, and verse 2, which uses triplets.

e. **Pre-Chorus (B')**

Image5 . Pre-Chorus (B')

Doc by: Farika, 2025

The second pre-chorus (B') is a repetition of section B, consisting of seven bars with two motifs, namely f and f1. Triplets appear in bars 61, 62, and 65 as variations in expression, while bars 65–67 show a decrease in dynamics as a transition to the Chorus. The long note at the end of the phrase provides emphasis and emotional space.

f. **Chorus (C')**

Image6 . Chorus

Doc by: Farika, 2025

The second Chorus is a repetition of section C and is coded C' (c, c'), consisting of 20 bars. The question phrase (c) is in bars 68–76 with two motifs, f and f1, while the answer phrase (c') in bars 77–87 contains three motifs: f2, f3, and f4. This section is a literal repetition of the previous Chorus, with a modulation from the key of A major back to C major occurring in bar 87.

g. **Bridge**

The Bridge is a part of a song that is not included in the main structure, such as *the verse* or *Chorus*. This section serves as a link between sections of the song, for example, between *the Chorus* and *the verse* or vice versa. In addition, *the Bridge* is often used to connect two parts of *the Chorus* by modulating the key, so that the transition between sections sounds more natural. Musically, the melody in the *bridge* section is generally arranged with a pattern that is different from *the verse* and *Chorus*, but still maintains harmony so that the transition between sections is harmonious and does not create an excessive contrast. (Putra et al., 2023).



Image7 . Bridge

Doc by: Farika, 2025

The bridge section (D) consists of 9 bars with two phrases: the question phrase (d) in bars 88–90 and the answer phrase (d') in bars 91–94. The question phrase contains the g and g1 motifs, with triplets and stepwise motion expressing anxiety. The answer phrase contains the g2 and g3 motifs, with consistent triplets, dense rhythms, and sharp ups and downs, reflecting peak emotions. Triplets dominate the entire Bridge, creating emotional tension. The modulation from C to A major makes this section the most dramatic and expressive climax of the song.

h. Coda

A coda is the closing or ending part of a song or musical composition that serves to conclude with a summary or climax. A coda is a short addition at the end that can be a few bars of melody or rhythm, explaining and completing the entire musical work. In song structure, the Coda typically provides the final touch that musically and emotionally affirms the end of the song, the final part of a musical composition that follows the last theme (Nugraha Putra & Dinata, 2023).



Image8 . Coda

Doc by: Farika, 2025

The coda section runs from bars 97–116, consisting of an interrogative phrase (bars 97–104) and a responsive phrase (bars 105–116). The interrogative phrase contains the motifs m and m1, with a triplet in bar 99 and a repetition of the motif in bars 101–104. Modulation occurs from C major to A major. The melody moves gently but emotionally up and down, with small steps and occasional leaps (such as fifths) on important words. The rhythm varies, including eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and triplets, giving a free and expressive impression. The response phrase contains motifs m2, m3, and m4, with improvisation and syncopation in measures 105–107, as well as a repetition of the motif from section C in measures 115–116. The Coda closes with a decrease in dynamics and tempo, the use of long notes (fermata), and the repetition of the phrase "I will not accept love" as a thematic emphasis and emotional conclusion.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that Mawang's creative process in arranging the song *Sial* followed the four stages of Wallas' theory, namely Preparation, incubation, illumination, and Verification. The process began with listening to the song deeply, then spontaneously developing musical ideas based on personal understanding. Mawang continued using the original version of Mahalini's song, unaltered, as a form of respect for the original work. He recorded vocals and instruments simultaneously, then continued mixing and mastering to produce the final composition. The melody structure of the song, arranged by Mawang, consists of verse I, pre-chorus, Chorus, verse II, pre-chorus, Chorus, Bridge, and Coda, with complex and diverse motif arrangements. Various melodic motifs were identified, including literal repetition, ascending and descending sequences, and augmentation techniques.

The researcher suggests that an in-depth study of Mawang's arrangement of the song *Sial* be continued in subsequent research. Many interesting aspects could be the focus of further study, such as a comparative study between the original and Mawang's versions, analysis of arrangement techniques, or the musical style approach used. This research is expected to serve as an initial reference and a supporting body of literature for future creative studies and music analysis.

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