

# The Performance of Theatre Mixed Text “*Pembayun*”: Open Boundary of *Mise En Scène* and Its Meaning

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Abstract: The Performance of *Pembayun* applies collaboration of performatively traditional and modern elements that form a *mise en scène* uniquely belongs to the group of *Lembaga Teater Perempuan Yogyakarta*, Yogyakarta Woman Theater. Theatrical contemporary performance requires a new form that is not only to revitalize tradition, but also to be closer and more reflecting to the needs of spectators. *Pembayun* is reflected as a multicultural performance from modern culture, the *Mini Kata*, and Javanese culture, *Bedhaya Dance*. The performance, presented at the crossing of ways of the culture and of artistic practices, creates an hybridization of tradition. There are three idioms from different cultures, i.e. *Bedhaya* Javanese Dance, the *Mini Kata* spontaneous gestures, and the gender ideology. *Bedhaya* has a pattern as well as choreography standard. *Mini Kata* produces an acting system of improvisation. The ideology of gender becomes an instrument for blending the *mise en scène* of the *Bedhaya* and the *Mini Kata*. The performance of *Pembayun* is a mixture of work with a controlled result yet still tied to the source of tradition.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

*Pembayun* was performed by the *Lembaga Teater Perempuan Yogyakarta* (LTP), Yogyakarta Women Theater, directed by Yudiaryani. The performance collaborates the elements of dance and theatre in order to express new *mise en scène* that reflects a gender ideology.

The story of *Pembayun* is known by the people around Yogyakarta and Surakarta. *Pembayun* is a love story between *Mangir* and *Pembayun*. The story, which has similarities with the well-known Romeo and Juliet, is staged with the basic ideas of Javanese traditional dance namely *Bedhaya*, and acting from modern theatre namely *Mini Kata*, and the women optional ideas based on gender ideology.

The historical story of *Pembayun* tells about the conflict between Panembahan Senopati from Mataram Palace in Yogyakarta and Ki Ageng Mangir Wonoboyo from Perdikan Mangir, near Mataram Palace. The story is reinterpreted by the play writer, Hirwan Kuardhani, for delivering a gender message. The idea of mixing performative elements between *Bedhaya* and *Mini Kata* is to give contemporary context of *Pembayun* performance. *Mise en scène* is a term derived from French that means an

arrangement of scenes on stage by the director through movements, compositions, and positions of actors, as well as the arrangement of lights and settings, the colour and style of wardrobe, and rhythm variation of music.

## 2 CONTEXT OF THE STORY OF PEMBAYUN

The story of *Pembayun* is an interpretation on the history of *Pembayun*, the daughter of Panembahan Senopati, the ruler of Mataram Palace. Panembahan Senopati insisted to control Perdikan Mangir that was known as a prosperous fertile region ruled by a democratic leader, Adipati Mangir. *Pembayun*, who disguised as a *ledhek* (a street dancer), was commanded by her father for being a spy. However, *Pembayun* and Mangir fell in love. *Pembayun* then tried to reconcile her father and her husband, but her efforts failed. Senopati was still looking for a strategy to kill Mangir. Since *Pembayun* disagreed with her father's plan, she also worked out not to have Mangir killed by her father. Thanks to the sacrifice of a loyal young men, Baru Klinthing, who disguised as

Mangir, Pembayun strategy worked. She then escaped with Mangir.

### 3 THEORY OF THE TEXT

*Pembayun* is not only a historical story, but also that of a memory of the past. The story translates traces into facts. In the hands of artists, history is never innocent, as the meaning that appears will be contextual facts (Alun Munslow, 1997: 35). Historical interpretation is also referred as a "work reference" which gives meaning for human activities in the past, today, and the future. Creative work reference of *Pembayun* lies in three issues; firstly, the problem of regional power between Mataram and Perdikang Mangir; secondly, the complicated love affair between Mangir and Pembayun; and thirdly, the characteristic problem of optional gender ideology.

*Pembayun* performance arranges the collaboration of various art conventions. Roland Barthes (1981: 35-36) says that a text redistributes language. Each text is an inter-text. Other texts are present in them through various levels with known forms, such as texts from previously existing cultures and texts that surround the culture. Therefore, the text is read and should be read with another text background. The text which becomes the background of the creation of a new work is called the hypogram, and the new text which absorbs and transforms the hypogram is called the transformation text (Michael Riffaterre, 1978: 11). Barthes calls the text, as the theory of network, a mixture.

### 4 OPENING BOUNDARIES BY MISE EN SCÈNE

The performance of *Pembayun* is referred to as an intercultural performance, because it does not merely display the source; it also presents the cultural workings of combining and crossing different forms of art and culture. Cultural work produces an aesthetic proximity between the stage and the audience. That is, the audience is in a position to observe the stage by following the parallel direction the actor performs, for example, when the stage deploys an art form from several cultures, the audience continues along with the actors' movements, feelings and thoughts. As the actors mix the sources, the audience can still recognize the basic elements of the performance.

#### 4.1 Bedhaya Dance Movement

*Bedhaya* dance movement in the performance of *Pembayun* refers to the concept of Javanese *Bedhaya* dance. *Bedhaya* dance is a classical Javanese dance that cannot be separated from the palace of Yogyakarta considering its origin and development. Soedarsono (1998: 2), a Javanese dance expertise, said that as a form of classical dance, *Bedhaya* has come to a high aesthetic crystallization, which already has a standard pattern and choreography. *Bedhaya* dance movement has a sacred ritual function and reflects the level of regularity, harmony, subtlety, and high self-control.



Figure 1: Bedhaya Like Dancing, inspired by the real Bedhaya Dance.

In *Pembayun* performance, *Bedhaya* dance movements have become a basic concept for the director to arrange the elements of performance on stage. Therefore, a sacred feeling emerged in accompanying some events, such as the birth of Pembayun, symbolic movements of Senopati's romance with Ratu Kidul, also the murder of Baru Klinthing figure disguised as Mangir, and the sadness of Pembayun when leaving her father behind to be with her husband, Mangir:



Figure 2: Figure 1: Bedhaya Like Dancing, inspired by the real Bedhaya Dance.

## 4.2 Mini Kata Improvisation Movements

Mini Kata comes initially from Rendra's training process along with the Bengkel Theater in 1967. Mini Kata presents improvisation of movements through attractive and symbolic movement called Gerak Indah (Yudiaryani, 2015:229). The improvisation and symbolic movement is mentioned a movement without structure. The source of movements derives from the actors' spontaneity to respond to external stimuli and actions. The attractive and symbolic movement use minimal words. Words are replaced through gestures to express imaginations.

This form of movements and word is better understood and felt intuitively. Thus, the communication with the audience becomes freer and more spontaneous (Goenawan Mohamad, 2000: 51-52). The mixture between Bedhaya dance movement and Mini Kata attractive symbolic gestures encourage instinctive movements that transform dialogues into aesthetic movements.



Figure 3: New Composition based on an improvisation movement

## 4.3 Gender Ideology as “an optional idea”

If an ideology makes the art as a collection of ideas with a system that provides the direction and

man's purpose to carry out life, then the implementation of ideology in art requires the art to do certain politics. Therefore, it is necessary to observe how the relationship between *Pembayun* performance and politics is. On the contrary, it is also needed to study how the politics of putting *Pembayun* performance in real life.



Figure 4: The Power of Gender as a reflection of a democratic power of *Perdikan Mangir*

The connection of *Pembayun* performance with the state politics is the reference to the relationship between the leader and his people. *Perdikan Mangir* is a symbol of a democratic government. It is portrayed by the style of *Mangir* who is close to the people. His power is run to improve people's welfare. *Mataran* wants to take over *Mangir* region. *Pembayun* conveys a message that a leader's powers are only in favor of the interests of his people. *Pembayun* prefers to follow her husband rather than to stay with her father at the palace. As a female figure, *Pembayun* chooses what she considers to represent the truth; that is, to be with his husband and his people.

Janet Wolff (1981: 142) said that art is a product of society. The statement explains that art should be viewed as the situation and the production of society, not as a manifestation of an artist's genius. The audience plays an active role in the final completion

of the artwork. *Pembayun* performance is a collective work formed by those from different academic backgrounds, i.e. lecturers, students and artists who are mostly women. The performance is presented for the benefit of Yogyakarta Women Theatre group; i.e. artistically seeking the possibility of female theater production form, and ideologically, conveying messages about women's empowerment in society. *Pembayun* is thus controlled and related to the tendency of the material and the values and background of its formation, the women.

Referring to the opinion of Sue-Ellen Case (1988, 114), female poetry (language) is constructed within the framework of a large stream of ideas of feminism which can be used philosophically, practically, and critically. *Pembayun* can use feminist social critics to design artistic goals and practices. Female poetry combines the two as a way of enforcing women's strengths in the arts area. These efforts have succeeded in establishing women's presence, understanding their "voice" through the way the audience accepts the psychological factors and thinking patterns of female artists, and the natural intercultural work of women, women's intellectuals, and women's social activists.

*Pembayun* performance shifts the political impact on arts, that is to turn criticism to aesthetics politically. Nearly 80% of the roles are given to female players. Composition and picture poses of actress highlight female toughness. This can be seen in the actings of *Pembayun*, *Adisara*, *Nyai Sepuh*, *Inten Prawestri* and *Sekar Dadu*. The character of *Nyai Sepuh* takes the role of a decision maker, strategy maker, and risk taker. Artistic arrangements, such as costume and light arrangement, as well as setting arrangements are no longer designed to show women as objects of male taste.

Women are the subject of dramatic events. Gender-based theater performances form the foundation of creating a "language" of women. Thus, *Pembayun* is used by the director and the actors to show their side to the question of women's "political position." For that reason, the new position of the female body on stage and the way it is portrayed through the mutual recitation of the two are rediscovered on stage.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

*Pembayun* performance is a form of the meeting of cultural ritualization that comes from the Javanese culture with the moves of *Bedhaya* and modern culture in *Mini Kata* movements. Through the mixed-

concept theatre which creates new *mise en scène*, the performance becomes freer and has a richness of imagination, so that the movement is able to have both aesthetic and political meanings. *Pembayun* performance conveys messages through a gender ideology, the ideology of emancipation and resistance. By renewing the performance convention, *Pembayun* performance has been an effort to create a contextual, fresh, and inspiring art for its audience.

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