

# Bridging Diffable-Non-Diffable Interactions Through Theatre: A Case Study of Teater Cangkir, Kabupaten Tegal

*Gregorius Tri Hendrawan Manurung*<sup>1\*</sup>, *Khothibul Umam*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Indonesian Literature, Faculty Humanities, Diponegoro University, Semarang – Indonesia

**Abstract.** This research was conducted to examine the practices of Teater Cangkir which bridges the interactions of the diffable and non diffable group in Tegal, Indonesia. The method used in this research is Sociology of Art approach which focuses on the production process and the public's reception of Teater Cangkir's performances. Data was collected through observations and in-depth interview. Observation was used to collect data of Teater Cangkir's production process. While the interview was used to align the data that has been previously obtained.

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author: [gregoriuspeculiar@gmail.com](mailto:gregoriuspeculiar@gmail.com)

## 1 Introduction

In Indonesia, disabled group was still suffering various forms of discrimination or ableism. A main incident of such discriminatory acts can be seen when the Minister of Social Affairs, Tri Rismaharini, asked a deaf to describe orally the paintings created by the deaf. Ironically, this incident occurred during the moment of disability anniversary [1].

AS quoted from Kompas.id report, Badan Pusat Statistik Republik Indonesia (Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Indonesia) reported that there are 22.5 millions disabled person in Indonesia in 2022 [2]. With a number of around 8% of total population of Indonesia, these disabled persons rarely appear in daily life and activities of Indonesian societies. This fact was caused by various factors, such as ableism, misrepresentation in mass media, limited access to work education, and public spaces.

According to a media academics, Roy Thaniago, there are two categories of disability representation in Indonesia: underrepresented and misrepresented. The representations of diffable in Indonesia mass media were often typical and erroneous[3]. The diffable were positioned as laughable, social burden, pitiable, asexual, and object of inspiration.

Even though been ruled in RI Law Number 8, 2016, it is still very difficult for diffable groups to access jobs. In Indonesia, number of diffable workers decline 0.61% during 2021 [4]. This decline was caused by discriminatory employment requirements, both in private and public sectors.

In his essay, Thaniago wrote that mass media are a space where interaction between diffable and non-diffable groups is possible though, in the end, a misrepresentation take place. Arts, especially performing arts and recording medium, can also be used as mass media because these arts often bring its creator message to be delivered to art connoisseur.

Teater Cangkir was founded in Kabupaten Tegal in 2018. This theater was initiated by diffable groups existing in Kabupaten Tegal and used as a medium of expression and interaction with non-disabled groups.

Based on the data given above, this study intends to identify practices adopted for creative processes in Teater Cangkir where these practices were used as a medium of interaction between diffable and non-diffable groups.

## 2 Literature Study

The involvement of persons with disabilities in the artistic processes can be seen as a practice of inclusive art. Fox and MacPherson define inclusive art as "the creative collaboration between learning disabled and non-learning disabled artists" [5]. The main focus of inclusive art is on the

collaboration process, not on the final products such as paintings, design, film, theatrical performance, musical performance, etc.

In the collaboration process between learning disabled artist and non-learning disabled artist there will be an exchange of knowledge and experience. This collaboration process is important because it can form a medium of communication, help artists with disabilities to recognize and realize their creative potentials, and also carry out self-advocacy.

Hasim and Rahayu in their article "Komunikasi Antarpribadi Para Disabilitas Dalam Proses Pementasan Teater di Smile Motivator Bandung" discussed communication patterns between persons with diffable and non-diffable theater trainers during the production process of stage for the Smile Motivator Community. The communication took places over a very long period of time so that the communication and training objectives were met.

The focus of Hasim and Rahayu in this research is to identify the forms and patterns of communication taking places during the training process.

### **3 Research Method**

This research is a field research that uses a sociology of art approach. The sociology of art approach sees artistic product as a result of collective work of art world ecosystem, rather than personal product of the artist [7]. This research highlights interactions between persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities in process of creating a performance in Teater Cangkir. The interactions that will be discussed are direct and indirect interactions mediated by theatrical performances. Data were collected by conducting observations and interviews. Observations were conducted to collect data regarding process of production of performance in Teater Cangkir, whereas interviews were conducted to harmonize the data. Finally, data were analyzed using an inclusive arts framework.

## **4 Discussion**

### **4.1 Teater Cangkir Profile**

Teater Cangkir was founded in 2018 in Kabupaten Tegal. Since its inception until now, all members of Teater Cangkir are diffable persons. Teater Cangkir welcome the involvement of non-diffable persons as members. So far, there have been 10 shows performed by Teater Cangkir.

Organizationally, Teater Cangkir is under the auspice of the Technical Implementation Unit for the Bina Karya Service, Social Service (UPTD LBK) Kabupaten Tegal. Main focus of UPTD LBK is assistance, advocacy, and empowerment of persons with disabilities in Kabupaten

Tegal. One of such activities owned by UPTD LBK is a business unit engaged in services of packing clothing products.

Teater Cangkir has staged 10 theatrical shows. Most of the scripts used here were written by theatrical scriptwriters living in Kabupaten Tegal.

Apart from being under the auspices of UPTD LBK, Teater Cangkir is also a part of the Gemblong Syndicate. The Gemblong Syndicate is a syndication of theater groups existing in Kabupaten Tegal and led by the Gemblong Theater. This syndication stands as a networking hub for theater groups existing in Kabupaten Tegal. In practice, theater group members of the Gemblong Syndicate help each other and exchange resources wherever one of theater group members will perform.

## **4.2 Internalization of Creative Potential**

In the process of working on a script, the Teater Cangkir is assisted by the Gemblong Theater which is also the caretaker of Gemblong Syndicate. Members of Gemblong Syndicate play role as director and mentor during the process of production of the Teater Cangkir stage.

According to Erlin, chairwoman of Teater Cangkir, steps of stage production at Teater Cangkir are selection of script by the director, process of reading the script for around 10 days, role assignment (selection of actors), and rehearsal process.

In the process of reading the script and assigning roles, each member of Teater Cangkir track their creative ability and potential. The intense reading process for about 10 days made the members of Teater Cangkir absorb and understand the whole story in the script, context of the script, as well as character, motive, emotion, and gesture of the characters in the story. This creative potential will be developed later during rehearsal process until the performance on stage.

During the training or rehearsal process, learning process and direct transfer of knowledge are also taking place. Elements of theatrical performance such as dramaturgy, acting, vocal drilling, sense drilling, are learned and practiced during rehearsal process as well as during stage performance.

This series of rehearsal and staging processes is what the authors see as a practice of recognizing and internalizing creative potential of each member of the Teater Cangkir.

In addition to their artistic dexterity, members of Teater Cangkir have also experienced positive impact that theater has on their daily lives. Erlin admitted that he felt an improvement of self-confidence after playing several roles and being on the theater stage. This self-confidence improvement helped Erlin interact with non-disabled people, which used to be his fear.

### 4.3 Theater as a bridge of interaction

Thaniago stated that mass media are a place for people to "meet" and interact with disabled groups. However, in practice it is often seen that people with disabilities are misrepresented in mass media, such as being perceived as laughable, social burden, pitiable, and object of inspiration.

Arawinda et. al stated the same thing, more or less. In their search for 10 films with disabled characters released after New Order Era, representation disabled groups in Indonesian cinema still point to various stigmas against persons with disabilities, such as being laughable, pitiable, family embarrassment.

One of the causes of mis representation is lack of interaction between disabled groups and non-disabled groups. Mis representation led to bitter stigmatization and discrimination against disabled groups.

Teater Cangkir's activities has an important position in the midst of murky representation disabled groups in mass media. Several scripts that were staged by Teater Cangkir, such as "Laku" and "Nyata", carried daily life themes about persons with disabilities and several their daily problems.

In the "Laku" script, Teater Cangkir tells about marginalization of disabled groups through restrictions on acces to works, education, and also difficulties in making romantic relationship. "Nyata" script focuses on a leper who receives a pile of stigma attached to him/her.

In addition to the theme of the script and the story being told, Teater Cangkir was forming an indirect communication through theatrical stage itself. Members of Teater Cangkir show directly that individual with disabilities are capable of performing theatrical shows. Physical handicaps or limitations are not a reason to distance arts from people with disabilities.

This practice was not positioned as an object of inspiration that aims to make non-disabled spectators grateful for their lives; otherwise, it delivers a message through direct practice that they are not aliens who are completely different from non-disabled groups. There are many activities, one of which is arts, which they can also practice, so we don't have to see them with pity.

In addition, Teater Cangkir also often rehearses in an open space; precisely in the yard of UPTD LBK office. This space was originally chosen for technical reinforcement purposes such as strengthening character internalization and vocal drill because open space presents more distractions than closed space. Further, rehearsal in open space was chosen so that residents around the office could watch it and interact directly with members of Teater Cangkir. Residents around the office often watched the rehearsals and communicate verbally with members of Teater Cangkir.

From the practice of rehearsals in this open space arises two-way interaction and communication between non-disabled surrounding people and members of Teater Cangkir.

## 5 Conclusion

Discrimination, limited access, and misrepresentation distance further groups with disabilities from daily life and activities of Indonesian common people. Finally, this situation will marginalize further disabled groups. Interaction which is not based on assumptions and stigma is the earliest effort to build better social conditions. Theater performances, as presented by Teater Cangkir, have the potential to build healthy interactions. In addition, theatrical production process also opens up opportunity for self-exploration development for persons with disabilities, both for development of artistic dexterity and other personal abilities.

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