

# Teater Titik Temu as a Village-Based Theater in Pematang

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**Abstract.** This research intends to put Teater Titik Temu (Pematang) as a village-based community theatre. The method used in this research is Sociology of Art approach which focuses on the process of art production. Data was collected from observations and interviews on the production process. The collected data then analyzed to determine the artistic and ideological position of the Teater Titik Temu.

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## 1 Introduction

Theater has a long history. Theater is often described as having Greek origins. The word "theater" itself comes from the Greek word "theatron" which means "a place or building for performance"[1]. One of the oldest script that can be classified as plays script comes from Greece - that is the script written by Aeschylus living between 525-456 BC [2].

Aeschylus' script contains plays as a form offerings to invoke the gods. As usual in Aeschylus scripts , initial phases of the drama or plays function as rituals of worshipping the gods. This practice was performed in not only Greece, but also in various countries with its many variants of performance but has the same root as rituals of worship [2].

Theater and performing arts have had a long history of development in Indonesia, as seen during pre-colonial era, during colonial era, and after Indonesia's independence. In 1955, Indonesian National Academy of Theater was founded by Usmar Ismail, D. Djajakusuma, and Asrul Sani [3]. This academy was the first higher education institute in Indonesia which focus on theater.

In the beginning of the second semester of the Academy in 1956, Sitor Situmorang delivered a speech with the title "Theatrical education and development of rural communities". In this speech, Sitor revealed that development and developmental plans tends to be too technocratical, because it focused merely on administration and technology. Elements of culture, especially of rural culture in countryside or rural culture in urban areas were neglected. Whereas, according to Sitor, planning that has no cultural anchors will transform many people into permanent empty human being [4].

Sitor proposed village-based theater because there is a continuity of values between villages and theater. Such values are intimacy, more intense humanity, principles of relationship, and self-sufficiency

Teater Titik Temu is an arts community founded in 2019. Since the beginning, Teater Titik Temu focus on working on stage performance in southern regions of Kabupaten Pematang Jaya, such as Watukumpul County, Randudongkal County, and Moga County. These counties are the areas where members of Teater Titik Temu live. In the process of production of stage performance, Teater Titik Temu often collaborates with art communities.

Based on the data given above, the objective of this research is to identify process of production and group management applied in Teater Titik Temu in line with its positioning as a kampung-based community theater.

## 2 Literature Study

Research on community theater or kampung-based theater was rarely conducted in Indonesia. In 2013, Marlasari wrote a script with title "Communication Pattern of Kampung-based Theater in Maintaining Its Existence (a Study on Angka Nol Community Theater, Krajan, Salatiga). This research focus on practices of communication, publication, and promotion adopted by Teater Angka Nol, a kampung teater in Krajan, Salatiga. Main focus of Marlasari is on practices of communication between the theater and outside entity, not on production process [5].

Community theater is one of artistic practices and this community assisted art groups that started growing in the end of 19th century and early 20 th century. Root of community theater can be tracked to Little Theater Movement that appears as alternative for commercial theaters in Europe and United States [6].

Research by Erven on community theaters in 5 countries and 5 continents shows that community theaters have no standards or specific esthetic style. Each community has its standards or aesthetic styles, respectively. Nevertheless, they have a common trait: they perform personal and/or local story on stage.

“It is united, I think, by its emphasis on local and/or personal stories (rather than pre-written scripts) that are first processed through improvisation and then collectively shaped into theatre under the guidance either of outside professional artist – who may or may not be active in other kind of professionals theatre – or of local amateur artist residing among groups of people that, for the lack of a better term, could perhaps best be called ‘peripheral’.”[7]

Research by Erven on 5 community theater in different 5 country and different 5 continents revealed that community theatres have no standards or specific aesthetic styles. Each community has its own standards or aesthetic styles. Nevertheless they have a common trait: they perform personal and/or local story on stage.

Furthermore, Erven said that subject matters of the story and aesthetic format of community theatre always come from the community itself. It has been observed by Erven that community theater is a tough aesthetic format which is capable of accommodating voices of marginal or marginalized groups[7].

## 3 Research Method

This is a field research that adopted the sociology of arts approach. Sociology of arts does not focus on end products, that are art works such as statue, musical composition, or theatrical stage. Sociology of arts

stated that art works are results of process of collective creation, so that the sociology of arts pays more attention to process of production, distribution, and reception [8]. This research will identify production style and management of Teater Titik Temu. Data were collected by conducting observations and interviews. Observations were used to collect data of production process of stage performance by Teater Titik Temu; interviews were used to align data. These data were analyzed purposely to determine artistic and ideological position of Teater Titik Temu.

## **4 Discussion**

### **4.1 Location and Arts Climate**

Teater Titik Temu see location as an important aspect in their group. Since its foundation on January 6, 2019, Teater Titik Temu focus their attention to southern areas of Pemalang. This decision has two backgrounds: artistic climate and residence of members.

According to Edi, founder of Teater Titik Temu, there are differences between northern Pemalang and southern Pemalang, especially in terms of artistic climate. In southern Pemalang, theatre is very strange for communities living there. It is contrary with communities in northern Pemalang: even Torro Margens, one of national level actors, is an alumnus of a theater located in northern Pemalang. This condition has motivated Teater Titik Temu to introduce theater to the southern Pemalang communities since several years ago.

The other reason is the fact that all members of Teater Titik Temu live in southern Pemalang areas. Focusing on stage around southern Pemalang area facilitates training and rehearsal matters because members' mobility take shorter times.

Residence of Teater Titik Temu members was taken into account in choosing location of stage. Stage is located in a kelurahan (equivalent with village) where a member lives. Six stage performances have been performed by Teater Titik Temu in three counties: Watukumpul, Randudongkal, and Moga. In each performance presented by Teater Titik Temu,, spectators are dominated by people living nearby the stage location.

Selection of these locations (kelurahan) have impact on the space of stage performance which is changing. Each location (kelurahan) has different conditions. It is very difficult to find a feasible show hall because theatrical art is not popular in southern Pemalang communities. Unlike professional theater, Teater Titik Temu could not force staging in a proper show hall.

Stage spaces frequently used by Teater Titik Temu are open space and village meeting hall. Obviously, these conditions change artistic style and stage performance adopted by Teater Titik Temu.

This selection of location of stage performance caused Teater Titik Temu has a special, emotional bond or relationship with the southern Pematang region. Intense activities in southern Pematang region caused this group should take into account social conditions and cultural arena of the region. Because location of stage is outdoor, Teater Titik Temu offer more chances for people around the stage to watch the show they perform.

#### **4.2 Local as a basis of works**

Throughout the four years of its existence, Teater Titik Temu has produced six performances. The six performances used scripts written by members of Teater Titik Temu. They choose to perform their own scripts due to the context of the community or society around the location where they will perform.

The common thread of the scripts produced by Teater Titik Temu are social theme or social criticism. However, theme of the scripts are always based on local issues. In choosing the script's theme, storyline and characterization, Teater Titik Temu always explores social issues that are currently actual in the location wherein they will perform. This current issues will be processed into story ideas and scripts for each Teater Titik Temu stage.

In staging styles, Teater Titik Temu has always comedic elements. Even though the issues raised by Teater Titik Temu are rooted in social problems that seem serious, they always insert comedic elements into the story.

Communication with and reception by local residents shall be the reason for Teater Titik Temu to always work on local issues and insert comedies. When discussing local issues, residents will be close to the theme and discourses being staged by Teater Titik Temu. This process becomes even more important when we remember that one of the members of Teater Timu is a resident of location of the stage. Meanwhile, inserting comedy as an effort to attract residents to continue watching the performance until it is finished.

Edi said that Teater Titik Temu had tried to present a script that had no comedy elements at all or "serious", borrowing Edi's words. The impact was that the audience, one by one, left the performance.

In each of its performance, Teater Titik Temu always invites collaboration with interdisciplinary arts community existing in the location of performance. The latter was invited to take part in the stage

of Teater Titik Temu, either in an opening act or to be involved as, for example, musical performer for Teater Titik Temu.

## 5 Conclusion

Teater Titik Temu claims to be an amateur theater group and it is still in the learning process. This reason drives them to limit domain of their activities. However, there is another crucial position that the Teater Titik Temu performs. The southern part of Pematang, both in terms of location and condition, is the basis for existence of Teater Titik Temu. Teater Titik Temu bases its artistic practices on the condition, needs, and potential of the people of southern Pematang. The principles and practices carried out by Teater Titik Temu are, consciously or not, the practices of community theater, which bases its existence as a theater group from, by, and for the community.

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