"Beralas Bumi Beratap Langit": An Investigation of Creating Role and Space through Site-Specific

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This article is devoted to the analysis of theatre performances "*Beralas Bumi Beratap Langit*" which uses a site-specific method. Central to the site-specific approach is concern to the potential of unconventional spaces. The site-specific approach seeks to use the unique landscape properties of the site, locations selected based on their ability to amplify storytelling and form a clearer background for the actors in a theatrical production. This approach in theatre studies, especially with regard to actors and spaces, seems to offer breadth and bridges to the creating role and the flexibility which many representations come together, site-specific is then used as a method that helps in achieving character through learning and creating acting, from the Covid-19 pandemic intervention which changed at least most of the methods in learning acting and other creative processes. This article aims to investigate a site-specific approach that is personalized in the interest of providing insight or catalysts on the mode of acting and actors as subjects in theatrical performances. Using the ethnographic method, data were obtained on the creative process during the preparation of the show by the "*Panggung Bercerita*" theatre community. Practical investigation of a site-specific approach to the theatre stage method yields the following conclusions: 1) natural sets create an atmosphere of intimacy, 2) helps actors feel immersion into the world being played, and 3) provides rich and culturally relevant visualizations of the actor's image.

Keywords : Actor, Acting, Covid-19, Creative Process, Site-specific, Space

INTRODUCTION

Theatre is a phenomenon; it is a work of art that not only speaks on aesthetics but also stores life knowledge. Theatre is thought to contribute to the discourse of social change, and an applicative form of theatres can be seen (Prendergast, 2009, pp. 7–8). If the reading of the theatre is thick with social and cultural nuances, the central ideas that represents the discussion of the theatres world is the reading in one area, namely the actors. According to Kesel (De Kesel, 2009, p. 183), the actor experience is more typically viewed as an aesthetic sublimation. The evolution of actor who were originally the subject of language but later became the subject of desire then the subject of encouragement, exemplifies the process. Theatrical performance by the Panggung Bercerita Community through the script *"Beralas Bumi Beratap Langit"*, departed from the cultural philosophy inherent in the lives from Orang Rimba, Jambi. Culture is depicted in the harmony between humans and nature, the forest as a home and simplicity to suppress the upheaval of ambition to achieve an absolute certainty. The idea to always provide an equal position between humans and the universe, is manifested in the form of values, morals, and traditions as the life guidelines of the Orang Rimba. Strong kinship as a collective form of Orang Rimba, teaches a simple value to respect thoughts and actions in interpreting life processes as a form of responsibility to nature, the environment, and human relationships.

Actors' main role in a theatrical performance, simply as a medium that carries and transforms the main message to be conveyed. In this performance actors are required to be able to present and bring a concept of culture as a material form that can be accepted by art connoisseurs. During the preparatory for the show, the actors went through a quite different creative process. From the Covid-19 pandemic intervention which changed at least most of the methods in learning acting and other creative processes. The need to find alternatives to the possibility of theater productivity continues, so it is necessary to look for alternative staging and other methods that follow. Site-specific then offers a new approach to acting which then gives new perspective on the actor's body, how the actor's space moves in creative processes until immersion is present for the actor with the attachment of the site or location being a benefit in acting practice.

As the author's interest in the practical application of specific theories discussed in the literature study that the author has carried out in the context of personalized actor investigations through a site-specific approach. This article will clearly look at the relationship between actors and text (as the subject of language) and actors with space (as the subject of the body), which will continue to have dialectics even though the creation of space then changes in the conventional stage to become site-specific. Using the ethnographic method, data was obtained from Panggung Bercerita theatre community through the creative process of performance script *"Beralas Bumi Beratap Langit"* which was staged using the site-specific theater method on November 11, 2021. The aspects that will be presented in the results and discussion chapter will start from the beginning about the body and the body interpretation of the actor which is interpreted through the process of acting regarding the analysis with (Stanislavsky & Benedetti, 2010). The dialectic of the subject occurs in the actor, the process of subject development will be explored if he adheres to Kesel (De Kesel, 2009) regarding the arguments that separate the actor's body in everyday life and the actor's body in the freedom of the stage. Furthermore, the contestation of space and site that occurs (Wilkie, 2004). How the actor is then able to define the subjectification of the body as space (Mitter, 2012). Site-specific, author interpret it as a practical approach that can become a bridge for actors in gathering formulations for the creation of role, bringing new space in the definition of the stage out of the conventional logic of development, it will free actors' ways of working both in the creative process and during performances.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The nature of data collecting directly from the participants or informants is used as a research technique in this study, as well as anthropological concepts (Murchison, 2010). As fieldwork, qualitative, interpretive, specific, and case studies are all strongly tied to ethnography as a method (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), it seems relevant to explain how meaning originates and is suggested from the actor's perspective (Gobo, 2008). The framework established by this technique finally qualifies investigations at the microscopic level, allowing researchers to comprehend culture as a causative factor that is detailed in detail (Geertz, 1973). The author did fieldwork during the creative process of *"Beralas Bumi Beratap Langit"* by Panggung Bercerita theatre community. This community has done many theatrical performances, one of the author interests when the theatrical production occurred in a moment due to Covid-19 pandemic, offered actual implication for the creative proses and workers. The subject in this research seems to exist in imperative, technological

adaptation, new subjectivities, values, method and adaptation, new moral, and particularly the meaning of new work. The field in this research took two places; Rumah Sunda Kepala as the community headquarter and Taman Hutan Raya Juanda in Bandung which the training ground process also the venue of the performance. In a simple reading of cultural insights that the author met through discussions with the research team from this community, ethnography which was originally at the method level, then the author explores it as a way to understand the momentum of body transformation as a simple way to imagine what will happen in the future related to the body and creation of role and space in the implementation of actors, so that it is likely to arise will often result in disjunction, resistance, restoration, and renegotiation of identity and status either as individuals or groups (Bridger & Pine, 1998, p. 8)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Stanislavski focuses on the point of "embodiment" or "to be" (Stanislavsky & Benedetti, 2010, pp. 351–354). This process is formed from a journey of exploring or adopting experiences that are strung together in mind, symbols, and feelings and manifested into the real body existence of an actor. The creation of roles, Stanislavsky stated that the main language of actors is knowing the synonyms of feeling (Mitter, 2012, p. 156). Only by feeling something, the actor can be satisfied with the familiarity close to the conditions needed to be (character). Alchemy draws reality from representation, the greatest fetter of its main actor is knowledge, if knowing is feeling and feeling fully being, then knowing is carrying out a logical expansion of being. Knowing more about the character means experiencing fully of all the elements and conditions so that it will eventually become sincere to become (the character). The dialogue intensified through Mitter's work dives into a deeper conception of what actors should do about parts of drama that do not evoke instant intuitive understanding. Stanislavski replied that, all such parts must be studied to reveal what material the actor has to encourage them to become (the character) (Brecht, 2014, p. 194). Between the terms excitement and understanding there is an assumption which is then called a fact assessment. It is further explained, assessing facts means taking all the foreign life created by the scriptwriter and making it his own (Brecht, 2014, p. 45) so that consciousness and ownership are one.

Mapping the body as an instrument for an actor, allows several devices and tools that can be a

catalyst for the close relationship between the actor and the character being played. New ideas in the course of the work of the Panggung Bercerita theater community, using a site-specific approach in performances and the creative process. What then became the main argument base for the director to use this approach, the extent to which the performance of this approach is understood in general in the whole production, and how the actor interprets the site-specific approach as a method in the process of creating role and not just a staging method. Before going deep into the core of the discussion, the author wants to bring this discussion to a simple search related to site-specific approaches or methods.

The initial identification of site-specific methods cannot easily be defined as the concepts of 'realism' or 'naturalism', especially since what can be seen is a performance with a distinctive appearance, design, and arrangement. The site-specific approach is used to imply something grounded. Site-specific works are very strongly associated with "presence", although materially ephemeral (Kwon, 2002, p. 85). The logic that emerges from Kwon's argument shows that it is undeniable that the core concept that is trying to be emphasized is that the nature of site-specific performances is the attachment to the site used, or even refuses to acknowledge the possibility of the existence of the show if you try to attach it to other sites. Pearson (in Kaye, 2013a) seems to agree with Kwon's view of site-specific performance, saying that site-specific must be believed, understood, and conditioned in detail by the ability to capture and interpret the site and the people found there.

Thus, it can be concluded that the site-specific approach to performing arts is: first, the performance is created as a direct response to the site; second, the show has a distinctive affinity to the original site; and finally, by moving a show to a new site, the purpose and function of the original show will change. After emphasizing the importance of the site's position in this approach, Duckler (in Kloetzel & Pavlik, 2011, p. 87) also emphasizes that the work must respond to the site holistically because it is not only what can be seen but also the response to what is smelled, temperature, audience response, or even the unintentional audience then influences the fundamental nature of this approach. In summary, the site-specific approach places importance on three main concerns: first, site centrality; second, the importance of the audience (unintentional and planned); and lastly, shows that cannot be moved to another site. However, this does not mean that all theorists have the same perspective as proposed by

Duckler. Gleave opposes the exclusivity of the site by saying that moving the show is destroying it or even limiting it. The movement of a site-specific work is understandable in terms of changing and informing the work, but it may also open the work to more creative possibilities (Gleave, 2012).

During the preparatory for the show *"Beralas Bumi Beratap Langit"*, the actor went through an intervention of the Covid-19 pandemic wich changed most of the methods in the creative process of acting and other components of production. The need to find alternatives to the possibility of theatre productivity continues, so it is necessary to look for alternative staging and other methods that follow. The selection of the location for the performance is a determinant of the whole series of creative processes carried out by this community. The reading of staging method is extended as an adaptive effort to keep creative production going. For the director, site-specific does not stop talking about the stage and movements against the conventional stage and limited to honesty in performances. Site-specific is then used as a method that helps in achieving character through learning and creating acting. The creative process is carried out by actors and director in Taman Hutan Raya (Tahura) Juanda, Bandung. From the director point of view the selection of specific locations in the training sessions is intended to provide an expansion in the actor's knowledge of forest life and the stimulus chain that can give the impression of honesty in the representation of Jambi's forests.

Speaking of space, environmental theatre is then specifically concerned with performances that create and use the entire space. Schechner (Schechner, 1971, p. 379), by investigating different spaces, indoor, outdoor, discovered space and changing space. Schechner (Schechner, 1971, p. 385) insists that every environment will grow out of the domain of work and interactions between actors, not in isolation from one another. In other words, space works into the performance, not only as a background, but as a manifestation of the unity of the performance. Two specific approaches used by Schechner to investigate and manage space are the modified space and the negotiated space. The transformed space is imagined by Schechner as an attempt to artificially insert production. While the negotiated space relies on the ability of the show to negotiate with the environment, engaging in dialogue is intertwined with the space itself (Wilkie, 2004, p. 13). Negotiated space, in Schechner's view indicates a permanent encounter between player and environmental space. As Stephan Koplowitz

(Kloetzel & Pavlik, 2011, p. 83) explains that site-specific makes actors think differently about the sites they experience and about art itself. It should influence how actors feel about themselves on the site and should inform their interactions with the site. This view again emphasizes that the correspondence of space and actors who play in space becomes an echo that will continue to fade to provide a record in site-specific works. How site-specific is then matched with acting and other creative processes will be discussed further below.

Stanislavsky stated that his system was based on experience. Stanislavsky concluded that it is sometimes possible to arrive at the inner characteristics of a passage by going through its outer characteristics (Kloetzel & Pavlik, 2011, p. 83). Stanislavsky in practice intuitively uses a system in which the body, not the mind, is autonomously responsible for authentic portrayals of characters. When the gap between self and role is bridged physically rather than intellectually then emotions seem to follow automatically. Therefore, the conscious mind is not the only alternative in contributing to subconscious inspiration when creating character: the body also has a purpose, though it may sound mysterious.

Working somatically, that is directly from the body to the emotions, does have several advantages. *First*, it removes the actor's self-awareness both through the apparent inability of the masked body physically to express shame and then the mask changes itself before the self has had a chance to account for the change taking place. *Second*, although the conception of feelings is elusive, the body has physical mechanisms that can be easily touched so that it is easier to handle, actors tend to be more comfortable dealing with physical actions than with feelings. An actor on stage only needs to feel a little organic physical truth in his actions so that his emotions will immediately respond to his inner belief in the authenticity of what his body is doing. In this case, it is much easier to emerge true truth and belief in the physical realm than in the spiritual realm (Stanislavsky, 1988, p. 150). Third, material cues also have the advantage of being easier to fix repeatedly. The actor's job is not just to evoke feelings but to sustain them over a long period of time, the body has the advantage of being much easier to disciplined to respond than feelings tend to be fickle. Stanislavsky says actors cannot control feelings; can only regulate physical action, if feelings then dry up or fade, there is no reason to worry; simply return to physical action and this will restore lost feelings (Toporkov, 2014, pp. 160–162).

It does not stop here, the actor then faces further challenges related to language issues, thinking background, responses, and allegations and minor intrigues that arise through the beliefs of the Orang Rimba, in other words the actor tries to find a bridge of thoughts about being Orang Rimba or even just borrowed the heads of Orang Rimba. The main problem occurs when the features in the role are not easily found in the actor's world which is usually more limited. However, the presence of the director is important part in the process of creating this character. Directors in this production are required to produce experiences in the creative process so they can then be used in performances. All characters have feelings that actors can identify with, because they directly reflect aspects of their own personality. The function of the director is simply to help actors find relevant personal experiences, actors are expected to independently animate the transition between self and character.

The Director of this show answers this obstacle with Stanislavsky approach to, memories of emotion and action. Memories of deeply felt emotions can sometimes make those feelings come back. After that, the feeling comes into being, using its prerogative to sharpen the actor's sense of honesty in character. Affective memory is a general term that refers to emotions and sensory memories. One of the keys to understanding and summarizing human experience is emotional memory. As an attempt to achieve experience, actors must be able to generate genuine emotions on demand. Stanislavski is highly critical to an actor who often use direct attempts to express emotions that produce clichés, what he calls the conventional external of simple mechanical actors and what he calls actor emotions (Stanislavsky & Benedetti, 2008, p. 31).

Actors must capitalize on their experiences, and they will experience a wide range of emotions – love, jealousy, even hate. Stanislavski points out that the character is brought together by the actor from the living element to himself, from his emotional memories and beyond; there are many circumstances, moods, and feelings that each person experiences, enough to become an artistic weapon in the creation of roles (Stanislavsky & Benedetti, 2008, p. 210). There is no need to find a correspondence between the emotions that the actor may have and the emotions the character is experiencing. If so, then there will never be actors who can play roles where they are of different ages or have different life experiences of the characters they want. Even if an actor has the appropriate experience for the role, the emotions that needed may not appear on demand. As Stanislavski notes,

'actors cannot regulate emotional memory as they do with books in a library' (Stanislavsky & Benedetti, 2008, p. 207). In An Actor's Work (Stanislavsky & Benedetti, 2008, Chapter 3), Stanislavski devotes a chapter to the memory of emotions and actions. Sometimes actors find appropriate emotional experiences with ease, but often another route is needed. It is important to understand exactly what Stanislavski meant by action. Actors can always rely on action, can always choose to pay attention to how they act on stage, and with this comes the inner content that is right for the role.

Making the role effective means putting the finishing touches to a role and then maintaining it truthfully in performance. Ideal actor works on themselves continuously: 'It's not enough just to know the "system". For that you need daily training and drill throughout your whole acting career' (Stanislavsky & Benedetti, 2008, pp. 347–348). Stanislavski viewed systematic daily exercise and vocal training as essential to the actor and experimented with a variety of movement and exercise forms to refine his ideas about the best methods for the actor. Similarly, a role is never finished but must always be kept alive, by the actor's daily work and by thinking about it afresh. Using all the elements of the system enables the actor to fuse or merge with the role.

Throughout the creative process the director gives a simple answer that special attention to one specific location does not merely bring aesthetics to the show. The ability to capture meanings and messages that appear in simple space observations (Tahura) depicted in the creative process provides an understanding of the nature of space that was successfully photographed by the director as reflected from the interaction of actors and sites. The director's ability to describe the real conditions of the Orang Rimba's life is at least slightly illustrated by the visual achievements obtained from the thought process and bodily interactions between Tahura and the actors playing.

CONCLUSION

The site-specific approach places the site at the centre of the creative process and responds directly to the site. In light of these original points, the creative process in the theatrical journey of *"Beralas Bumi Beratap Langit"*, a personalized site-specific approach developed four new realizations: (1) a site-specific approach, requiring the director as a facilitator, (2) site uncertainty being interpreted as a real condition of the authenticity of the forest brought by the results of the research team's

observations, (3) the relationship or interaction between the site and the actors is an important key for the show. Investigating the performance by the Stanislavsky concept in actor dialogue and Schechner in spatial reading, three aspects can be identified as practical implications of using a site-specific approach: 1) natural sets create an atmosphere of intimacy, 2) help actors feel active immersion in the world being played, and 3) provide rich cultural visualization relevant to the actor's image.

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