

Indonesian Theater Public in Five Cities on Java Island

J Jaeni
{jaenibwastap@gmail.com}

Department Theatre, Faculty of Performing Arts, Institut Seni Budaya Indonesia Bandung, Bandung, Indonesia

Abstract. The awareness to understand the public of theatrical performance arts has long disappeared from the existence of artists in Indonesia. This side is quite problematic even though it is not a core part of the artist's attention. On the other hand, managers of performing arts buildings, including government agencies related to the development of preservation zones and the development of cultural arts have also never had a movement to map the public performing arts theater as part of the arts ecosystem. At least since the early 2005s, the public theater performance has not been well defined until today in Indonesia. Theatre troupes thrive, theater production rates are high, but the public is shrinking and unidentified. Research methods conducted to map and classify theater performance audiences with a phenomenological approach. This method prioritizes in-depth interview work and participant observation targeting the public of theatrical performance arts when watching theater performances in major cities in Indonesia. The results of this study show three public classifications of theatrical performing arts including critical-appreciative, snobis-interactive, and collective-participative. The three groups are always present in the theater performance space. They are part and parcel of a theatrical performance event.

Keywords: Theatre; Public Arts; Performance Communication; Art Ecosystem

1 Introduction

The Indonesian theater public, should be glorified as Traub & Missong [1] who maximize the "welfare" of the audience to form a positive view of theatrical performances. On the other hand, to attract the interest of the public, theatrical performances are needed [2]. Thus, organizing the public or the community of theatergoers is a necessity, because it does not mean anything to a theater performance without the presence of an audience community.

Saini KM, an Indonesian playwright, in event Teater sorted the theater public into three categories, including; lay public, appreciative public, and critical public [3]. The lay public is identified with people who do not know at all what a theatrical performance means. While the appreciative public is a group of people who are able to enjoy a performance, while the critical public are those who in addition to being able to enjoy the show are also able to give judgment to a show they witness. The classification offered by Saini KM is of course oriented to theatrical performances worked on by "educated" circles. But today, the facts speak differently, that theater performances do not really belong to schoolchildren alone. Theater belongs to the community which in every city area in Indonesia is not always worked on by student groups (active). The theater already belongs to factory workers, public transportation drivers,

motorcycle taxi drivers, young professionals, traders, farmers and even celebrities to intellectuals and politicians

Seeing the tendency of theater to belong to all citizens of all professions, this requires a new perspective in reading the public of theatrical performances. Iannelli & Marelli in Sardinia, Italy, try to sort out public participation in art events as part of the democratic way of contemporary society [4]. Wood, et.al has analyzed performing arts with the complexity of society, which shows that the two are very related, even if they do not get an answer to the connection [5]. From an economic perspective, Gałecka & Smolny show the degree of diversification of public accessibility by each theater generally [6].

The aim of this research is to balance the theater arts ecosystem between the public, theater performances and artists. By classifying the theater arts public, it is hoped that theater artists will be able to read the public at every venue where performances are held. Reading the public is not defined as serving the tastes of the audience. However, it is more about how theater actors can contribute to society in organizing arts by being able to educate, provide significant values, and project performances as an illustration of a solution to the socio-cultural problems of their community.

2 Method

Public studies in the arts that have been described in the previous background section have different methods in exploring the existence of public theater performances in various countries. On this occasion, I would like to show how the current public classification of theatrical performing arts in Indonesia is through phenomenological studies. The method used in this public art research is through observations and interviews conducted over three years. Observations were carried out at public theaters when theatrical performances took place in several cities in Indonesia, including Jakarta, Bandung, Surakarta, Yogyakarta, Surabaya and Padangpanjang. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted with 15 theater artists/performers and 50 theater performers in each performance.

Data from observations and in-depth interviews with unstructured questions were reduced to answer the public classification of theater performances. The phenomenological approach is included in the constructivist research paradigm. This means that this paradigm intends to look from a socio-cultural perspective as a systematic analysis of socially meaningful full action through direct and detailed observation of the arts supporting community (art practitioners and fans) in everyday life [7]. The three-stage process is carried out through orientation or description, reduction or focus, and selection stages. Through these three processes, researchers can classify public theater performances as a form of community construction that supports theater.

3 Result and Discussion

Public Communication in the Arts

Today's theater publishers actually have their own interests when they come to theater performances. They as theatrical public have their own functions that cannot be ranked (unleveling) their existence. The essence of it all is to create interaction and communication in

an art and culture event, especially theater. Art is supported by the public which provides awareness, that theatrical events become part of public communication, where the public appreciates and communicates with the performance [8].

Public communication according to Tubbs and Moss will occur in public places (public) as a planned event, there is an agenda, and people who are present at an event are appointed to carry out special functions [9]. Given that theatrical performing arts communication is related to public communication, the definition of public can be understood through the terms stated by Wasburn, et.al as a term used to replace the term "general public" or "people" or more specifically as a number of people who share the same interests, interests, or hobbies [10].

If so, it is a fact that theatrical performance is a part of social life that can be distinguished from the creative process of theater which is more "closed" [11]. By considering public concepts, it may be realized that theatrical performances will be able to be enjoyed, appreciated, and able to communicate with the public in their respective contexts. Conversely, theatrical performances cannot be forced on communities or societies that are not public in any context. These are public barriers in the communication of theatrical performances which therefore requires a common understanding, between creators as theater actors and the public which has now changed.

In the framework of this common understanding, for the public in general, that theatrical performances are public property. There is no prohibition for the general public to appreciate theatrical performances. There is no specific requirement for a person to watch a theatrical performance.

For theater creators or performers, related to publicly owned theater performances requires an understanding that the performance area is not the private property of artists. Theatrical performance is a medium of public communication that must proudly accept and provide art services in the social sphere for the public. This, of course, requires an understanding of the front stage and back stage areas according to Goffman as the area of a person's role to package themselves (self performance) in the social dimension [12]. When it was done, an actor is faced with broader ethical risks where practitioners negotiate blurred boundaries in a safe and artistically creative way [13]. That is, theater creators or performers are part of social life who must be able to adapt to the public who come to appreciate the results of their artistic work.

Public Classification of Theaters

Seeing the current trend of Indonesian theater that is owned by all circles, actually indicates how the theater public is not limited to active educated circles or only students in the field of theater. The tendency in some colleges, theatrical performances want to try to fulfill their public service mission, but also to utilize and acquire resources [14]. In big cities in Indonesia, such as Bandung, public theater performances are dominated by educated youth. In the city of Jakarta, public theater is dominated by educated teenagers and adults, as well as in Yogyakarta, Surakarta, Surabaya, and Padang, West Sumatra. However, in the regions there are also theatrical performance activities where the public is not only educated in line with the available public art spaces [15]. The theatrical performance public shifted from the laity, appreciative, and critical to a more open, critical-appreciative, snobiz-interactive, participative-collective theater public.

The critical-appreciative public is a group of people who appreciate and communicate with theatrical performances as conveyors of artistic values and manifest problems from various aspects, such as social, cultural, economic, legal, environmental and others. This group is people who still believe that theater performances are not just performing arts that are not only entertaining but performances that have value, can be narratives about the phenomena of their

society and can also be arguments from the problems of their society. Local residents, local politicians, artists, art professors, art critics, and newspaper columnists are heavily involved in discussing the art, doing their critique in newspaper articles, in public spaces [16]. By the critical-appreciative public, theatrical performances can be central to socio-political resistance and recalibration of public space [17].

While the snobiz-interactive public is a group of people who use theater performances as a place for self-existence or self-actualization in public life. They deliberately come to theater performances to show fill-art in themselves as humanist figures, even though their understanding is not like the critical-appreciative public. Snobiz-interactive groups have a role to enliven theatrical performances as a form of classy entertainment. On the other hand, the interactive nature of the audience can be part of the theater performance itself [18]. Theatrical performances can be a space for self-promotion in politics and also part of their business to achieve profit and benefits that are more inclusive in scope [19].

In contrast to the participative-collective public, it is the base public of any theatrical performance produced. A participative-collective public is a group of people representing theater groups, relatives of performers, and solidarity artists. At the level of artist solidarity, there is also solidarity of performance themes, for example performance themes related to the environment, so participative-collective will get attention from environmental activist stakeholders, and others [20]. They are creators, performers, relatives of theatrical performance productions, and communities in the same concern or ideology as the theme of theatrical performances. This public support is very significant for the life of theatrical performances. They watch performances based on a sense of community, collective life, and creative solidarity that can give spirit to the sustainability of theatrical production. This kind of public is always there in every place where the show takes place, although the number is not so large.

The results of the analysis show that of the three public classifications of theater performances in Indonesia the same has access rights and in every theater performance there is always the presence of the three public classifications. Thus, the theater performance will be more lively when attended by the three public groups of performances. But if the theater performance is only attended by participative-collective groups, then the atmosphere of the performance space feels normal, just as if it is attended by a critical-appreciative public, the atmosphere will only be a formality. The following is an overview of the presence and public classification of theatrical performances in Indonesian theater life.

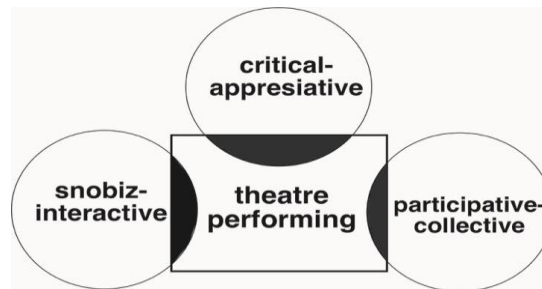


Figure 1. Public classification in theater performances in Indonesia

4 Conclusion

Understanding the classification of audience / public / audience of theater performances is important for creators or performers of art in serving their public, and important for the public for the theater performances they will appreciate. The critical-appreciative public is a theater performance audience that is dominated by educated circles and treats theater performances as learning spaces and their representation in voicing events in society. The snobis-interactive public is a theatrical performance audience that is dominated by various circles of officials or businessmen and treats theatrical performances as a space of leisure time and self-existence to provide classy performance level as a panajerik tradition in court culture. While the participative-collective public is the audience of theater performances dominated by community solidarity, kinship of artists, and common interests. This public maintains the permanence and resilience of the existence of theater performances in every region or theater groups in Indonesia.

Theater performance works that offer value can provide a stimulus to solving life problems from all categories of public theater performances. Through the public classification of theater performances, there is a challenge for theater creators or actors to provide something valuable to their public. Theater activists are advised not to feel the smartest and most knowledgeable about the events that occur in society through theatrical performances, but leave it to the public to judge the results of their creative work by understanding the same position in the social sphere.

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