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SUASANA
TEATER ENSEMBLE

Jentayu



VENUE: SHAW THEATRE, 100,
EUSTON ROAD, LONDON NW1
3 - 8 AUGUST 1981. (7.30 p.m.)

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LONDON INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF THEATRE

A Note from the Director

In early December 1978 when I presented the Dance drama *Dayang Sari* at the invitation of the Malay Studies Department of the University of Malaya to celebrate its 25th Anniversary, I expressed the conviction of creating dance dramas from legends, myths, classical dance movements and music, and costume designs among others. In this manner the past is always in continuous interaction with the present and transmitted through creativity towards the future. This effort shocked some practitioners of 'frozen culture' who published in leading literary magazines and also newspapers their objections. Today I am even more convinced about my second production '*Jentayu*' which has followed the same path as '*Dayang Sari*'.

The source of this tradition is the famous legend of Rama and Sita which inspired the Performing Arts throughout most parts of Southeast Asia. Over the centuries the leading characters of Rama, Sita Dewi, Laksamana, Garuda, Hanuman, Ravana and others have been embedded in Southeast Asian traditions with considerable regional and local variations.

The Malay Peninsula too had its own individual personality within this tradition. This is reflected in oral stories, literary *Hikayats* and *Wayang Kulit* performances. This dance drama boldly emerges from within the broad confines of that context. It focuses on a lesser known and undeveloped character — *Jentayu* — but no less significant, and it makes her the central figure in the play. The dance drama interprets the story using established dance movements drawn from Malay classical dance disciplines such as *Gamelan*, *Terinai*, *Makyong* and the *Silat*. Likewise the music was composed and costumes were designed from existing traditions. Moreover it inspired a National Poet to pen a poem for the occasion. All this and more was done in the conviction that the heartbeat of a tradition is creativity.

This production has brought forward many talented individuals into Malaysian Dance Theatre. Among the musicians, there is Haron Aminur Rashid bin Salim who leads the Gamelan Orchestra with great confidence. Others include Khairi Khamis, Yunus Muhi, and Isnain Abdul Rahim, to mention a few. Together the 10 member group of musicians are able to sustain and execute the dramatic requirements of the production. More significant is the discovery of Ghazali Osman who plays *Geroda* with great dynamism. He



has a good future in Suasana Teater Ensemble where his potential would be further developed.

To date, *Jentayu* is the longest performing dance drama in the country. It is indeed a pleasure to share *Jentayu* with other nations for the London International Festival of Theatre.

Azanin Ezane Ahmad

A graduate in Economics from Monash University, Melbourne, Australia in 1975 and Post-Graduate Studies in Management in 1977. Currently, a Bank Executive with Bank Bumiputra Malaysia Berhad.

Active in promoting Malaysian dance theatre in Melbourne Australia since 1971. Upon returning to Malaysia in July 1977, was specially invited by the Ministry of Culture to play the lead role of Puteri Mengindera Seri Bulan in the dance theatre production called Inderaputra.

In 1978 launched the dance drama called 'Dayang Sari' as its Director, Choreographer, Musical Director, and principal dancer.

In 1980 shouldered the same responsibility for the second dance drama production 'Jentayu'.

Studied under the expert guidance of traditional exponents of indigenous art such as Pa'Chik Ismail Bakti from the Kelantan Royal Court, and Pa' Mat and Ma' Nan of the Royal Trengganu Gamelan.

SYNOPSIS

Out of the pages of the magical past in Malay literature comes the story of JENTAYU which is presented as a classical Malay dance drama. It is accompanied by the vibrant sounds of ancient gamelan instruments. This Langkawi folk tale is about an epic battle between the mythical birds representing good and evil — the heavenly, noble JENTAYU and its sworn earthly enemy, Geroda. The struggle is over the betrothal of the Princess of China with the Prince of Rum. The terrifying Geroda is bent on destroying the marriage and swore that should he fail he would banish himself from the world. So he kidnaps the princess and keeps her prisoner in the mythical island of Langkapuri. The princess invokes help and in her despair JENTAYU appears and assures her that the promised marriage will be fulfilled. In the meantime, the Armada of Prince of Rum and Raja Merong Mahawangsa sails the high seas on their way to China. The great and fiercesome Geroda sets out to destroy the ship. In the confrontation, Raja Merong Mahawangsa in desperation shoots the magical arrow — *Pusar Sempani Gembira* — from which JENTAYU appears. In the ensuing fight JENTAYU casts a hypnotic spell on Geroda which enables the beseiged Putra Rum to escape and swim ashore to the magical island. At Pulau Langkapuri, Putri China stumbles upon an unconscious Putra Rum. In her grief and sorrow JENTAYU appears and revives Putra Rum which brings forth much happiness to the two royalties. Geroda reappears menacingly to destroy the reunion. JENTAYU flies in to protect them and thus begins the Big Battle (*Perang Besar*). Geroda triumphs but his joy is shortlived when he sees that JENTAYU has safely reunited the prince and princess. In his anger and embarrassment he banishes himself to *Laut Kalzum*.

JENTAYU re-emerges and flies the skies, watches and protects the Universe with her magical powers.

JENTAYU

Buka Panggung

A symbolic gesture steeped in tradition respecting the stage and welcoming the audience.

Overture

Scene 1

The clouds part as Jentayu, the mythical guardian bird, appears spreading her wings as if to protect the universe from all evil.

Scene 2

The mighty Geroda makes his appearance. He vows to break the betrothal between the Prince of Rum and the Chinese Princess.

Scene 3: Princess' Palace

The princess' chief lady-in-waiting (Dayang Utama) leads the court maidens in beckoning the princess to play in the garden. Geroda attacks, drives away the maidens and flies off with the princess and Dayang Utama to Pulau Langkapuri.

Scene 4: Pulau Langkapuri

Lost and helpless, the Dayang Utama surveys the scene before declaring it safe for the princess to leave Geroda's cave on the island. Gloating over his catch, Geroda appears hovering over the princess. Later amused by their attempts to spurn him he flies off. The forlorn princess then appeals to the heavens for help. Jentayu answers her pleas and brings her hope in a vision that she will soon meet her prince who will rescue her.

Scene 5: The Armada

Sailing forth to meet his future bride, the Prince of Rum encouraged by his court jester (Kundang) joins his men and his protector the famous warrior Raja Merong Mahawangsa in merry-making. The jester teases an impatient prince anxious to meet the Chinese princess.

Scene 6: The Attack

Bent on destroying the prince, Geroda launches an attack. The warriors are killed trying to defend the prince. Only Raja Merong Mahawangsa and the prince are left to fight Geroda.

Interval (15 mins.)

Scene 7: The Magical Arrow of Hope

Knowing that he would be no match for Geroda, Raja Merong Mahawangsa shoots the magical arrow in a desperate plea for help. Jentayu comes to the rescue and as the mighty birds battle, Raja Merong Mahawangsa and the prince leap to safety.

Scene 8: Jentayu Fights Geroda

Both equally strong, Jentayu uses her magical powers to hypnotise Geroda. Thus weakened Geroda is defeated.

Scene 9: On Pulau Langkapuri

The princess and Dayang Utama find the prince on the island. Thinking that he is beyond help, the princess pleads for Jentayu's assistance. Jentayu appears and revives the prince. The two lovers are united thus fulfilling her promise. The wrathful Geroda attacks and in a fit of anger kills the Dayang Utama. Jentayu in the meantime whisks the lovers off to China.

Scene 10: The Big Battle

Jentayu returns for the climactic fight against Geroda. This time however, wise to Jentayu's hypnotic powers Geroda avoids her eyes and finally rains a series of lethal blows on her. Geroda's triumphant strut is shortlived as he sees in the distance the lovers safely sheltered in the court of China. Thus failing to accomplish his vow, he banishes himself to the vast ocean (Laut Kalzum).

Scene 11

Jentayu re-emerges and flies the skies, watches and protects the universe with her magical powers.