

Dance Drama

Seri Rama ~ Siti Dewi



Presented By Suasana Dance Company

Artistic Director's Notes

We are deeply honoured that Duli Yang Maha Mulia Raja Nazrin Shah Ibni Sultan Azlan Muhibbuddin Shah, Pemangku Raja Perak Darul Ridzuan has graciously consented to grace this theatre event. His royal presence has given profound meaning to our living traditions.

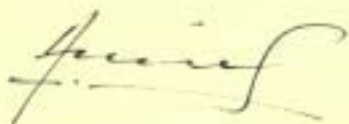
Over the last ten years Suasana Dance Company has single-mindedly pursued to establish the contemporary definition of Dance Drama in this country. The "distinct Suasana form of theatre" utilises the raw materials of traditional art forms and translates these pulses into stage using the technical advances of modern theatre with specially choreographed movements of dance and music arrangements. The storyline, dance movements, music, costume and set designs are all heavily researched from available manuscripts and living traditions. Modern theatre with its artistic division of labour is the patron of past traditions.

For this current season, Suasana has turned to the Ramayana Story. This production was world premiered in the United States Of America in May 1988 and was televised nationwide by RTM 1 on 7th. September 1988.

The Ramayana Epic has coloured the performing arts of South-east Asia through the millenium. There is only One Seri Rama and One Siti Dewi, but thousands of artists have been inspired to tell the story after their own image to make it theirs. Thus through the passage of time each region evolved its own very distinct cultural traditions. The Ramayana Epic has always been graphically told and retold through the Wayang Kulit theatre. This living tradition is central to Malay cultural life in the countryside and in the Royal courts.

Based on this ancient heritage, Suasana transforms music and shadow play into the realm of dance theatre. Makyong dance vocabulary drawn from yet another old Kelantan court theatre performance translate this classical saga into a moving performance steeped in mystical qualities.

I thank the Ministry Of Culture and Tourism, Majlis Perbandaran Petaling Jaya and sponsors who have made my art endeavours possible in the last decade.



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Azanin Ezane Ahmad.

Synopsis

Seri Rama - Siti Dewi

Life is reflected in the Ramayana Epic. The eternal tale of romance and love and of the unexpected from the worlds of old continues to have contemporary appeal. Images and reality, illusion and substance are all embodied in the human experience.

This "Seri Rama - Siti Dewi", performance seeks to dramatise the essence of life. The theme is set in an earlier episode of the Ramayana Epic.

It begins with the initial courtship of Seri Rama in a temple with many images of Siti Dewi. After successfully distinguishing between image and reality, Seri Rama journeys with his bride, Siti Dewi, and his brother Laksamana, into new adventures.

The highlight of this theatre production is when Seri Rama and Siti Dewi confront the River of two waters - Air Jernih (Crystal) and Air Keruh (Muddy). They drink the forbidden 'Air Jernih' and are transformed into monkeys. Their hopes to return to human life is left to the resources of Laksamana. Truth is found when Seri Rama and Siti Dewi are immersed in 'Air Keruh'.

"SERI RAMA - SITI DEWI"

as the story unfolds

BUKA PANGGUNG

The Play opens with the traditional "Lagu Bertabuh" that accompanies all "Wayang Kulit" (Malay Shadow Play) performances. It is a ritual adhered to signifying the opening of the performance.

BATANG CERITA

In this short dialogue the Tok Dalang (Puppeteer) gives the audience a hint of the story to come. Dialogue, song, music, comedy and action are essential components of a Wayang Kulit performance. In tonight's presentation, Suasana Dance Company will translate the world of Shadow Play into the world of Dance Theatre.