

Classical Dance Lessons at Pura Mangkunegaran, Surakarta

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ABSTRACT

The classical dance of the Mangkunegaran style is a dance that is characteristic of Pura Mangkunegaran and being a differentiator from the classical dance of the Kasunanan style. Langen Praja is an organization of Pura Mangkunegaran and known as well as a place to studies and accommodates the younger generation to practice the classical dance of the Mangkunegaran Style which is a typical dance of Mangkunegaran. Mangkunegaraan classical dance style carried out by Langen Praja are divided into two materials, including Mangkunegaran classical dance style for female dance and Mangkunegaran classical dance style for men. This study aims to answer how the classical dance learning process carried out by Langen Praja at Pura Mangkunegaran, Surakarta. This research uses descriptive qualitative method with data acquisition through documentation, interviews with informants and observation at the research object. The results of this study indicate that learning the Mangkunegaran classical dance style carried out by Langen Praja is one way to maintain and preserve the Mangkunegaran classical dance style.

Keywords:

Learning, classical dance, Mangkunegaran style

Introduction

In terms of history and art, the Mangkunegaran Style dance is classified as a classical traditional dance, which until now can still be found staging the Mangkunegaran classical traditional dance for various purposes by the community at Pura Mangkunegaran. The embodiment of the creativity of the human soul dance is manifested in the form of change, structured as an answer to situations that become human (Soemaryatmi, 2018). The various thoughts and concepts that underlie the formation of the Mangkunegaran Style dance are clearly a socio-cultural reflection of its era. The form of the dance is a combination of the Yogyakarta Gaya dance with the Surakarta style dance, which is based on its history that the dance was created by Mangkunegaran dancers who studied the Yogyakarta Gaya dance and the Surakarta Gaya dance (Malarsih, 2007). With this, Pura Mangkunegaran has a special type of dance which is considered the property of Mangkunegaran and is a characteristic of Mangkunegaran. This dance is indeed by Pura Mangkunegaran itself and the general public known as the Mangkunegaran Style dance.

In addition, because at that time Pura Mangkunegaran was in the Javanese cultural area as a whole. Pura Mangkunegaran is the former center of the Kadipaten government over the division of power from the Surakarta Sunanate which until now has maintained the preservation of ancestral culture by forming an organizational structure and managing it with a special management model (Malarsih, 2007), this special method applies to organizations within the walls of Pura Mangkunegaran. Given also that historically K.G.P.A.A Mangkunagara I as a descendant of the Mataram Dynasty, various wills mandated to all descendants of the Mataram Dynasty, one of which includes various issues regarding Javanese culture, have also been preserved to this day. One of the organizations in Pura Mangkunegaran which until now has become a forum for preserving Javanese culture including the classical traditional dance of the Mangkunegaran Style is Langen Praja (Prabowo, 2007).

The position of the Javanese art form related to the palace was further complicated by the continued sensitivity to its historical identity as a court art known for its "standard" distinctiveness which was considered rigid by most young people. In addition, learning classical dance cannot be done in any place, the palace or palace are the only places that facilitate learning classical dance, one of which is Langen Praja at Pura Mangkunegaran. Langen Praja is one of the places that studies and

accommodates the younger generation to practice the classical dance of the Mangkunegaran style which is a typical dance of Mangkunegaran, but unfortunately there are not many young people who learn classical dance there, because being able to become dancers in Langen Praja is not easy. Previously, the dancers had to go through some special training before being selected to enter Langen Praja and become palace dancers.

Research on dance is very closely related to the actors of the arts and the situation of the supporting communities. The research was carried out based on several reasons, including because Mangkunegaran Palace is one of the cultural heritages in Surakarta and is a heritage palace of the Mataram kingdom which is still active in carrying out various activities in the arts, especially Mangkunegaran art style. This study aims to describe how the learning process of the classical dance style Mangkunegaran performed by Langen Praja and what methods are used in the learning process. The benefits of this study are to provide information and descriptions to the general public regarding the learning process of classical dance and what Langen Praja does, which is one way to maintain and preserve classical dance in the Mangkunegaran Style, Surakarta.

Methods and Materials

This research method is descriptive qualitative and uses descriptive data in the form of documentation data, interviews with informants and observations by looking directly at the object to be studied. The approach used for this research is a case study, which is one type of qualitative research approach in which the researcher makes in-depth observations of a program, event, process or activity of a group and the researcher collects detailed data using various procedures.

This research was conducted at Langen Praja Pura Mangkunegaran which is on Jl. Ronggowarsito No. 83, Keprabon, Banjarsari District, Surakarta City, Central Java. This research uses research data sources that refer to two sources, namely primary data sources and secondary data sources. The primary data source is in the form of information obtained directly from sources through direct interviews. Secondary data sources include supporting data sources in the form of documents, books, archives, photos and videos that support research data. All data sources obtained can be used as reference materials for research so that research can provide the desired information and outcomes.

The first step in this research is to make observations in the field, namely to Langen Praja at Pura Mangkunegaran where the learning process of the classical dance of the Mangkunegaran Style is taught. Observations include elements of observations carried out for five months in the field. Observations were made by observing and observing carefully how the learning process of the classical dance of the Mangkunegran style taught by Langen Praja.

In addition, researchers collected data and information related to learning classical dance in the Mangkunegaran Style through interviews in the form of direct questions and answers with dancers, dance coaches and also Langen Praja administrators at Pura Mangkunegaran as an effort to obtain data and facts about what is in the field. Interviews in the form of questions and answers cover various matters related to the learning process of the classical dance in Mangkunegaran Style by Langen Praja at Pura Mangkunegaran, Surakarta.

Results and Discussion

The History of the Mangkunegaran Style Dance

The history of the development of dance, especially in Java, including Javanese traditional dance, has gone through a long process from time to time in line with changes in traditional dance actors and in accordance with the prevailing values of the era. Javanese traditional dance that we know today, in general, consists of the Surakarta traditional dance and the Yogyakarta traditional dance. Surakarta traditional dance and Yogyakarta traditional dance are Javanese dances whose cultural roots have their roots in the Islamic Mataram era, which according to Clara Brakel in her book entitled Javanese Dance (1991), Javanese traditional dance was created by the kings of Mataram Islam, namely Panembahan Senapati, Sultan. Agung, Hamengkubuwana, Pakubuwana and Mangkunagara. Initially, this Javanese traditional dance only appeared and developed in the owner's palace environment. All dance works, their creation is always returned to the king, because the king is the center of power. Then from the two Javanese traditional dances came the terms we often hear, namely Surakarta Gaya dance and Yogyakarta Gaya dance, namely Kasultanan and Pakualaman. The Surakarta style dance is divided into two, namely the Kasunanan style and the Mangkunegaran style.

We can still find this Mangkunegaran style dance until now and we will see it when we visit Pura Mangkunegaran, Surakarta. In the pendopo of Pura Mangkunegaran, we can find the learning process or practice of the classical Mangkunegaran dance performed by Langen Praja. Langen Praja is part of the Mutual Culture structure. Reksa Budaya itself is an organization at Pura Mangkunegaran whose main task is to make Pura Mangkunegaran a center for the development of



Mangkunegaran culture. In carrying out its duties, Reksa Budaya is assisted by Reksa Pustaka, Barawiyata and Langen Praja. Meanwhile, Langen Praja is in charge of carrying out routine training (gladen), art performances which include the Mangkunegaran style dance (Malarsih, 2007).

Picture 1. Pendopo Puro Mangkunegaran (Source: Personal Documents, 2020)

Dance Learning Process at Pura Mangkunegaran

Gladen or dance practice at Langen Praja is carried out routinely once a week every Wednesday from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon accompanied by live gamelan music. For every practice, the sinden wears a complete kebaya and uses a bun, while for female dancers wear jarik samparan, sampur and long kebaya. Male dancers use jarik and sampur or other dance properties required according to the dance material. Dance materials used for gladen are classical dances. The notion of classical dance is a dance that has undergone a high artistic crystallization process which has the main characteristic of being a complex movement. In Indonesia, classical dance is associated with the aristocratic court, so it is often referred to as the Palace dance (Novi Anoegrajekti, 2008).

Dances that have classical characteristics in Indonesia are generally dances originating from the palace because the palace is a place that has order and all the facilities and infrastructure, making the palace the only place that supports the development of dance to achieve a high enough crystallization of value. Similar to the classical dance of the Mangkunegaran Style which also develops within the walls of Pura Mangkunegaran, the classical dance of the Mangkunegaran Style is a dance that is characteristic of Pura Mangkunegaran and is a differentiator from the classical dance of the Kasunanan Style. Classical dance learning in the Mangkunegaran Style carried out by Langen Praja is divided into two materials, including dance material for the female dance, namely the Srimpi Pandelori dance, Bedhaya Surgical Madiun, Srimpi Moncar, Gambyong Rento Kusumo, Golek Montro, Golek Lambangsari, Mandra Swara. Meanwhile, the dance material for the male dance includes the Wireng Wirapratama, Wireng Bandabaya, Wireng Sancaya Kusuma Wicitra, Wireng Gathukaca Dadungawuk and many more.

There is one more thing that needs to be known, namely the learning or training system used in the learning process of the Mangkunegaran style classical dance. This teaching method is widely used in sanggar-sanggar or non-formal organizations, namely the nyantrik method. According to James R. Brandon, the transmission system of each generation through traditional teaching methods is divided into nyantrik and formal learning. The formal learning system is carried out by involving the roles of teachers and students that take place in an institution with an amount of money as wages or compensation for services provided by the teacher. Brandon explains about the nyantrik system as written in the book *Traces of the Performing Arts in Southeast Asia (2003)* "A young man sits behind the stage; he sees and listens to performances, he studies. As time passed, this young cantrik was given a small assignment. He becomes a spear bearer or plays one of the easy instruments. How high he climbs in a troupe depends entirely on talent and luck. Teaching situations are unstructured and informal. The "student" learns by repetition and is expected to imitate exactly what he sees and hears from older people doing."

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learning system used in Langen Praja is a classical Javanese method, which is often referred to as "nyantrik" or imitating a trainer in front of students so that students can mimic the movements of a dance coach. The nyantrik method is widely used in Java and is associated with the arts such as learning wayang and dance in formal schools and art studios.

Picture 2. The learning process of the Mangkunegaran style classical dance at the pavilion of Pura Mangkunegaran (Source: Personal Documents, 2020)

At Pura Mangkunegaran, the provisions given by Langen Praja, before becoming palace dancers, dancers who want to enter and practice classical dance in Mangkunegaran style must memorize some dance material first through "nyatrik" or imitating the coach (the dance master) in Prangwedanan Ward Pura Mangkunegaran. After the dance masters see their students who feel they are worthy according to the patrap and wiled of the dancers, then the dance masters choose the dancers to become palace dancers, so these students can immediately follow the learning process or gladen in the pendopo of Pura Mangkunegaran and become dancers palace. After becoming palace dancers, then the dancers can learn more about the classical dance of the Mangkunegaran Style and



can dance to the classical dance of the Mangkunegaran Style using taste sensitivity and is supported by live musical accompaniment (gamelan) every time they practice.

Picture 3. The musicians ‘penggrawit’ lead the gladhen at Pura Mangkunegaran (Source: Personal Documents, 2020)

Efforts to preserve the art of classical dance in the Mangkunegaran style

The learning process of the Mangkunegaran Style classical dance which is carried out regularly once a week by Langen Praja is also an effort to preserve the classical dance of the Mangkunegaran Style. One of the efforts made by Langen Praja in addition to holding gladen or routine training is also holding performances every certain days which according to Pura Mangkunegaran is a day that Mangkunegaran commemorates and the classical dances of the Mangkunegaran Style are performed.

In addition, preserving and preserving Indonesian culture can be done in various ways. There are two ways that people can do, especially as the younger generation, in supporting cultural preservation and participating in protecting the nation's culture (Hildigardis in Sendjaja, 2019), namely Culture Experience, which is cultural preservation carried out by plunging directly into a cultural experience. For example, if the culture is in the form of a dance, the community is encouraged to learn and practice mastering the dance and it can be performed every year in certain events or the holding of

festivals. Thus the local culture can always be preserved. Then the second, namely Culture Knowledge, is a cultural preservation that is carried out by making an information center about culture that can be functionalized into many forms. The aim is for education or for the benefit of cultural development itself and the potential for regional tourism. Thus the younger generation can enrich their knowledge of their own culture. Besides being preserved in the two forms above, local culture can also be preserved by getting to know the culture itself.

Tabel 1. Concept of preservation and cultural heritage (Johanes Parlindungan, 2018)

No.	Aspect	Local Perspectives	Global Perspectives
1	Value	Spiritual and moral	National identity
2	Conservation techniques	Regular exercise (<i>gladen</i>)	Art observers, humanists, historians, experts
3	Spread	Around the walls of Pura Mangkunegaran (community)	Promote through performing arts (tourism, performance events)
4	Agents involved	Organizational committee (Langen Praja)	Performers of the arts along with other professional teams

The concept of preserving the arts, in this case the performing arts, especially dance, is an art that is intangible, so the way to maintain it is with imagination and creativity, unlike preserving antiques stored in museums. The preservation of dance, especially classical dance or dance that has been hundreds of years old, requires extra handling. If the surrounding community still uses and performs this dance in various events or there is regular practice (*gladen*), it is possible that an art will grow and remain sustainable in the community. On the other hand, if the community no longer cares about these arts, they will gradually become extinct because there are no more future generations.

Maintaining a traditional art does not mean just maintaining form, but rather to the spirit and spirit or traditional values of our ancestors, thus, we will always be able to align the spirit of traditional arts with the development of people's lives today (Nursyam and Supriando, 2018). Therefore, the efforts made by Langen Praja are an effort to preserve the classic Mangkunegaran style dance. Through the process of learning and dance performance, this can indirectly make the classical dance of the

Mangkunegaran Style known by the public and still exists and is sustainable among the people around the walls of Pura Mangkunegaran.

Conclusion

Langen Praja's routine arts or training lessons deserve appreciation from the general public. Maintaining and preserving the traditional court dance, especially classical dance, is not easy. Because palace dance can only be taught within the palace, in this case Langen Praja at Pura Mangkunegaran, Surakarta. But there is nothing wrong too, if the palace wants to be a little more open in the sense of allowing or showing court dances, especially the classical Mangkunegaran style dance at art performances or events that all people can reach and see. The concept of preservation and cultural heritage globally can be used as a reference for preserving classical Mangkunegaran dance to the general public. Openness to the times also needs to be used as a reference so that the classical dance of the Mangkunegaran Style still gets interest for the next generation of young generations. Thus, the regeneration of the dancers of Pura Mangkunegaran can continue and the classical dance of the Mangkunegaran Style will continue to exist for thousands of years later.

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