Mahardika Dance Creation Process

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Abstract

This paper aims to reveal a creative process of the Mahardika dance creation conducted in 2006. This disclosure is important to see how the concept of traditional dance development still maintains the Balinese identity. The Mahardika dance, a new creation form of Balinese dance, comes from the creative process between I Wayan Sutirtha as the dance choreographer and I Nyoman Windha as the musical composer of the dance accompaniment. Mahardika means freedom or release from worldly ties, which refers to the Sutasoma figure as the central character in the Mahardika dance. It is adapted from the main theme of the Bali Arts Festival, namely Swabawaning Idep, meaning the radiance of nobility. The process of creating dance refers to the theory of Alma M. Hawkins in the book Creating Through Dance, including exploration, improvisation, and formation. The Mahardika dance consists of four parts. The first part describes the atmosphere of meditation with a silent atmosphere, the second part depicts the meeting of the Sutasoma and Dewi Candrawati with a happy and romantic atmosphere, the third part portrays the war of the Sutasoma and Prabu Purusada with a tense atmosphere, and the fourth part represents the consciousness of Prabu Purusada and Sutasoma sitting on a lotus flower with a serene atmosphere. In addition, the costumes are adjusted to the characters. Certainly, it does not interfere with the dancer's movements but helps and opens aesthetic spaces in the choreography of the Mahardika dance creation.
INTRODUCTION

The creative process plays a crucial role in choreography development. Creativity is the heart of creating choreography in dance performances. Choreographers must have strong imaginative abilities to develop creativity (Ardiansah 2014). There are many kinds of dance in Bali, which places demands on choreographers to create captivating dance performances that appeal to the audience. Through this creativity, we can delve deeper into the creation process (Alfaraz and Putra 2022) of the mahardika dance.

During the 28th Bali Arts Festival in 2006, the choreographer of the mahardika dance had the opportunity to create a dance work for an event of the festival. The choreographer and I Nyoman Windha, whom the Gianyar Regency Government appointed, they worked on a new creative dance work to represent the Gianyar Regency in the Festival Gong Kebyar Dewasa of the 28th Bali Arts Festival in 2006, a prestigious event throughout Bali (Roeder and Tenzer 2012). They decided to focus on the character of Sutasoma as the central figure in their creative dance work. Mahardika dance can still be enjoyed for its beauty on Agung Studio's YouTube channel at the following address: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lIJRJhoPgRA&t=68s.

The choice of the story of Sutasoma in the creative dance work entitled "mahardika" was made to align with the central theme of the 28th Bali Arts Festival in 2006, namely "Swabawaning Idep," meaning the radiance of generosity. The selection of themes for the Bali Arts Festival has answered the hesitation often appearing during its implementation. The rapid growth of tourism often necessitates the preservation of local culture, so the original purpose of the Bali Arts Festival or Pesta Kesenian Bali (PKB) from merely preserving local culture has been proven (Wulandari, Purnami, and Mahagangga 2021). I Nyoman Windha is a Balinese maestro of karawitan (Santosa, Saptono, and Sutirtha 2022).

In light of the presentation, a choreographer must be creative and capable of turning the insignificant into something beautiful and meaningful to discover new patterns. The essence of creativity lies in finding something new within the existing (Sumardjo 2016:84). Creative Balinese artists, particularly in the field of dance, have produced numerous new works, such as I Wayan Dibia with the manuk rawa dance, N.L.N.Suasti Wijaya Bandem with the cendrawasih dance, I Nyoman Cerita (late) with the satya brastha, I Ketut Rena with the merak angelo dance," and many other dance works rooted in the "aesthetic values of Balinese dance" (Rianta, Santosa, and Sariada 2019).

All those creations of artists have originated from various sources of inspiration. Related to the case, an artist and choreographer are continually motivated to explore creativity in applying and realizing a dance work. During the 28th Bali Arts Festival in 2006, the choreographer had the opportunity to bring dance work for an event of the Bali Arts Festival. Collaborating with I Nyoman Windha, whom the Gianyar Regency Government appointed, they worked on a new creative dance to represent the Gianyar Regency in the Festival Gong Kebyar Dewasa, a prestigious event of the 28th Bali Arts Festival in 2006.

The choreographer and I Nyoman Windha agreed to appoint the character Sutasoma as the central figure in the creative dance work. The choice of Sutasoma's story for "mahardika" aligns with the central theme of the 28th Bali Arts Festival in 2006, namely "Swabawaning Idep," meaning the radiance of noble thoughts. Mahardika or freedom, in this context, is interpreted as liberation from the worldly ties, and Sutasoma is the essence of the peaceful-hearted individual who attains this state through yoga. The selection of the Bali Arts Festival's theme (Ruastiti 2010) is from local wisdom, where many "ancient Javanese literary texts containing profound philosophical values used as sources of inspiration for creating performing arts" (Santosa 2021). In this case, the story of Sutasoma was not transferred as is. However, the movements were processed with the principles of dance composition to
create a dance piece that avoids monotony (Nastiti and Malarsih 2021).

Mahardika is a dance work that comes from the Bali Arts Festival in 2006, representing the Gianyar Regency in the Festival Gong Kebyar Dewasa. It is performed by the sekheha of Gong Teruna Mekar Banjar Kebon and involves four male and four female dancers. The performance uses a large lotus flower prop as a symbol of purity and sanctity, in alignment with the character of Sutasoma in the mahardika dance. Dance movements, literature, costume design, staging, theater, and musical elements are all components that shape the performing arts (Suroso 2018). To avoid multiple interpretations of the choreography, it is essential to consider the unification of space and time by limiting the use of the title of the work, music, costumes, props, and dance movements (Susanti 2015).

The figure of Sutasoma was agreed to become the central character of the work entitled “Mahardika” with a duration of 11 minutes. After studying various stories about Sutasoma, the choreographer decided to arrange the story of Sutasoma’s successful endeavor by realizing the extremely wicked Prabu Purusadha, who had imprisoned 100 kings in the world. The mahardika dance is performed by a group of eight individuals, consisting of four male and four female dancers. The choice of eight performers is closely related to the choreographic requirements, as it involves various supporting characters alongside Sutasoma, such as Dewi Candrawati (Sutasoma’s wife) and Prabu Purusadha as the antagonist. I, Nyoman Windha, as the musical arranger for the dance, utilized a complete ensemble of Gong Kebyar instruments as the dance accompaniment (Yasa 2018). As explained above, this work was created because of the Gong Kebyar festival at that time. The theme appeared firstly in the kakawin literature in Smaradahana, composed in the 13th century in East Java by Mpu Dharmaja, and it is followed by the complicated development of metaphors within the Sutasoma Buddhist kakawin arranged by Mpu Tantular in the mid-14th century (Hunter 2019).

**CREATION METHOD**

The Mahadika dance was created using Alma M. Hawkins’ method in the book _Creating Through Dance_, namely exploration, improvisation, and formation. Exploration phase is a process of daydreaming, imagining, and thinking about ideas that will be realized. Improvisation is the process of selecting from exploration. In addition, formation is the final process of the artwork that already has a form. The earliest stage passed by a creator is the creation process of the artwork. Before looking for supporters of dance and karawitan, the ideas used were determined to make it easier to convey. The idea to work on the mahardika dance emerged because it followed the theme of the 28th Bali Arts Festival in 2006. The theme offered is Swabawaning Idep, which means the radiance of nobility. Then, the choreographer agreed on a day to meet with I Nyoman Windha to discuss matters relating to the work, such as the theme, rounding, and atmosphere desired in the work. The other thing that is also very important is determining the dance supporters. It is hoped to get reliable and loyal dance supporters to be able to maximize this mahardika work. The decision to use eight dance supporters with a formation of 4 female dancers and four male dancers is due to the need for choreography of the mahardika work that is Sutasoma as the main character, Candrawati and Prabu Purusadha as the supporting characters according to the story being told.

The improvisation phase is the second or follow-up stage after the exploration or investigation phase. This phase is the pouring phase of the concept and several elements supporting the dance, especially the discovery of movements through the body media using sensitivity to space and time (Sal Murgiyanto 1983:22). The experimentation process is essential to be implemented to create new movements.
Although not all movements played during improvisation will be used, there will be a selection process to choose movements based on the work needs. During this stage, the choreographer processed and developed movements from traditional dances. The search for movements was done freely and spontaneously. Experiments were conducted continuously to determine the used movement designs so it could select movements that define the identity of the mahardika dance work. The encountered movements were documented and recorded through video. Therefore, it makes them more easily recalled during subsequent rehearsals. These experiments are conducted collectively with all the dancers to achieve the desired movement designs and the floor patterns group following the agreed-upon schedule.

The formation phase is the final phase of the entire dance creation process. In this phase, the mahardika dance work has been formed according to the dance structures that have been arranged but still require further refinement. Therefore, regular rehearsals are necessary to accomplish the dance work, emphasize and clarify movement designs, and establish cohesion in floor patterns and expression to give each movement a soul. Additionally, the dance music, composed by I Nyoman Windha as the dance accompanist, is synchronized with the dance movements, both the accentuation and agreed-upon timing duration.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Mahardika is a new creative dance that, in its implementation, showcases dance movements by processing and developing the existing traditional dance. "New creative dance is a new formation resulting from the choreographer's expressive movement creativity and innovation" (Sukmawati 2016). The mahardika dance is shown in a group format consisting of four scenes that are interconnected and inseparable from the others.
The final part is kebyar. The male dancers stand while the female dancers sit with the kneeling position that is back from the male dancers. They perform the agem movements by rapidly moving their eyes (nguler) in the rhythm of the gamelan music, following a diagonal floor pattern. This scene is a transition from a romantic story to a battle scene. The male dancers transform into the character of Purusadha with vigorous movements.
inspired by the jauk dance character. Occasionally, they open their mouths to symbolize giants. The female dancers also change from the Candrawati character to the Sutasoma character by folding their long fabric into simpler resembling the man's fabric. Then, the female dancers perform the movements of male dances taken from the baris dance character.

The next scene is the encounter of the Sutasoma and Purusadha, depicted with fast movements in contrast to the floor pattern with a rhombus shape. They face each other. In addition, several floor patterns also describe war, including facing each other in groups and individually with opposite movement patterns. The way to show the character of Purusadha, who is strict and powerful, is by doing a pose or tableau by lifting one male dancer by three male dancers. The movements of female dancers or Sutasoma are more static and calm. The movements tend to remain silent as a depiction of Sutasoma's calm and wise nature. In this battle, Sutasoma is depicted by a silent movement with the right palm facing forward, succeeding in conquering Purusadha. In addition, at the end of the dance, the Sutasoma figure rises on a lotus flower. The Sutasoma figure is also surrounded by the other dancers in the yoga position.

CONCLUSION
The creativity of the choreographer's creation process made the mahardika dance successfully performed with great appreciation from the audience at that time. Moreover, the judges awarded the mahardika creative dance as the best performance for the collaborative work of I Wayan Sutirtha as the choreographer and I Nyoman Windha as the music composer. The message conveyed to the audience through the mahardika dance is nobility will always defeat greed, as portrayed through the characters of Sutasoma and Prabu Purusadha.

The performance of the mahardika dance refers to how the artwork is shown to the audience. It is determined by the audience's perception and perspective on the performers' work.

The media plays a significant role in supporting the performance of an artwork. Related to that case, the mahardika dance was performed on the grand open stage at Pura Jagatnatha in the Jembrana Regency. The dance consists of eight dancers. They are four males and four females. It chooses the character of Sutasoma with the theme of Swabawaning Idep. Swabawaning Idep means the radiance of nobility that has been determined in the Bali Arts Festival at the time.

Costumes used in a performance are equally crucial. They can help emphasize and clarify the characters played by the dancers. Well-designed costumes can influence and clarify the space of the dance movements. They also enhance the aesthetic value of the artwork. Therefore, in the mahardika dance, the costumes are carefully designed not to bother the dancers' movements but rather enhance the aesthetic value of the performance.

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REFERENCES


