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## '100% Yogyakarta': portrait of a city on the Stage

By Sri Wahyuni

At a glance the theater show held at the Yogyakarta Cultural Park's (TBY) concert hall over the weekend was just like any other performance.

As the show began and the performers appeared one by one on the stage, the audience slowly realized that this was not an ordinary performance. Titled "100% Yogyakarta", the performance, which was brought to the stage by German-based Rimini Protokoll in cooperation with local theater group Teater Garasi, was a fascinating piece of documentary theater.

Apart from presenting interesting facts about Yogyakarta, the play was also performed by ordinary people who had no previous experience performing in a theater show. The cast consisted of 100 people from different backgrounds.

"What we were looking for from the beginning was not actors and actresses, but experts of their respective lives in the context of their being residents of Yogyakarta," Naomi Srikandi of Teater Garasi said.

The two-hour show was performed on both Saturday and Sunday night in Yogyakarta.

The performance opened with the appearance of 38-year-old statistician Istato Hudayana from the Central Bureau of Statistics, Yogyakarta provincial office.

In his introduction, he talked extensively about statistics; their application in real life and how people can have fun when learning about or doing things with statistics.

"I live in Mlati, so I reflect 11 percent of Yogyakarta's population. I am male, thus representing 49 percent of the population. And because I am Javanese, I am a part of 70 percent of Yogyakarta's residents," Istato said.

After finishing his speech, he introduced the brother of a friend as the second performer who later introduced his son as the third actor in the show. This went on until the 100th performer was introduced.

The performers covered a wide variety in terms of age, occupation and social background. There was a baby and a 90-year-old woman; the homeless and the wealthy; even transgender participants and people living with HIV/AIDS.

Questions were asked over the rest of the play, requiring all on stage to respond.

The questions ranged from traditional demographic questions, like where the people on the stage were born, what languages they spoke, and so on to more interesting inquiries. For example, there was also a part where non-voters were taken to a separate part of stage to be asked basic democratic questions.

Then in the anonymous scene, during which the stage was darkened and people were asked to respond using flashlights, questions about intimate and very private matters, including their sex lives, were asked.

More existential questions — about life and death — were asked later in the play.

Stefan Kaegi of Rimini Protokoll said that through the project, the group wanted to show the audience that very different opinions could be brought together and that people could ask questions that may be considered taboo or offensive.

"You can ask these questions on stage and people stand up for their opinions. It is also okay to agree or disagree. This is a democratic process," Kaegi said.

He also expressed his appreciation that people who had HIV/AIDS could share the same stage with those who wanted to have Sharia. Or people who are afraid of communism working together with people who feel that the government should apologize to the victims of the 1965 incident.

By following the responses given by a particular participant to the questions, he said, the audience could also build up a narrative from the respective participants as performers said whether they had been in jail, taken illegal drugs or broken the law. "I think there are many stories because it's 100 people on the stage. Nobody can be everybody," Kaegi said.

Kaegi said that it took six months for the group to prepare for the performance in Yogyakarta.

The casting process, he said, was conducted by Teater Garasi in cooperation with Kunci Cultural Studies Center. "100% Yogyakarta", he added, aimed to offer a fresh perspective about Yogyakarta and invite the audience to reflect on the daily realities of their city.

A performance with the same concept was first staged in Berlin, Germany, in 2008 and has so far been taken to 27 cities around the globe.

The performance in Yogyakarta was part of German Fest, an initiative of the Federal Foreign Office, Germany, and was jointly organized by the Goethe-Institut, German Embassy and EKONID.

Naomi said that Teater Garasi was interested to get involved in the play for several reasons. Among, them she said, was that it was interesting in terms of format and the theme of talking about a city through the perspective of its residents. It showed how theater could actually be a resident's forum.

"This is actually an ancient Greek concept. And now it can be realized here," she said, adding that the performance was very relevant with the plurality of Yogyakarta.

Helgard Irene Haug of Rimini Protokoll said the most interesting thing she found in the Yogyakarta performance was the religious questions that were asked of the participants.

"That was a big decision. We never experienced it before so far," Haug said.