

The “Nyai Ontosoroh” Theatre Project

Adapted from the novel “Bumi Manusia” (“This Earth of Mankind”), by Pramoedya Ananta Toer

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Produced by Perguruan Rakyat Merdeka (PRM – Free Peoples Forum) and supported by Elsam, Institut Ungu, Jaringan Nasional Perempuan Mahardhika, JARI, Kalyanamitra, Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia, Komunitas Ciliwung, LBH APIK, Pramoedya Institute, Pantau, Perkumpulan Praxis, Perkumpulan Seni Indonesia, and Solidaritas Perempuan.

Why “Nyai Ontosoroh” and what is the relevance to us today?

Pramoedya’s character of Nyai Ontosoroh is Sanikem, one of the many millions of village women living in colonial Indonesia. She is sold by her father to a Dutchman just as she enters puberty. His payment is that he is promoted in the Dutch owned sugar mill. She becomes the concubine of Herman Mallema. But this young woman, Sanikem, fights; she fights to become an independent person; she studies and she struggles to win sovereignty over her self – but not just for herself, also for her children, her family, society and her people.

Nyai Ontosoroh is a character of strong opinions, resilient and unsundering. She fights back against the arbitrary exercise of power; she shows the seeds of self-sufficiency and independence and fires up the spirits of all those who suffered oppression. But she also looks after and guards over those who have been beaten down by oppression.

The story of “Nyai Ontosoroh” is the story of how character is developed, strong and sovereign and able to confront and resist oppressive power without surrendering either personal or class integrity.

Why theatre and who are the producers?

The story of Nyai Ontosoroh was first told by Pramoedya Ananta Toer in the prison camp on Buru Island in the 1970s. He told the story to the prisoners there – political detainees since 1965 – in a period where they had just suffered a wave of killings and torture and there was much demoralisation. Pramoedya told this story to remind them: if even a person as weak and helpless as a young, uneducated village girl who had been made the property of the overwhelmingly powerful colonial power of the day could stand straight and firm and resist, then so must they all on Buru Island. The story of Nyai Ontosoroh is an integral part of Pramoedya’s novel This Earth of Mankind,

the first of the series of novels now known as the “Buru tetralogy”. This Earth of Mankind has been translated into all the world’s major languages. Faiza Mardzoeki has adapted from the novel this new drama entitled: “Nyai Ontosoroh”.

Theatre is a media for understanding used by many people, including those struggling for the sovereignty of the people. One of the outcomes of the Nusantara Cultural Assembly or Cultural Jamboree held by the Free Peoples Forum (PRM) in December 2005 was that PRM should actively promote artistic and cultural expression which promote ideas of popular sovereignty or which helped this be achieved in practice,

On this basis, PRM has adopted the proposal by Faiza Mardzoeki that the play “Nyai Ontosoroh” be performed as part of a theatre advocacy project. PRM recognises how the manuscript “Nyai Ontosoroh” brings forth the process of character-building as part of resisting oppression while retaining full integrity.

PRM has since invited other individuals and organisations to become involved in the Nyai Ontosoroh Theatre Project. These include Elsam, Institut Ungu, Jaringan Nasional Perempuan Mahardhika, JARI, Kalyanamitra, Komunitas Ciliwung, LBH APIK, Pramoedya Institute, Pantau, Perkumpulan Praxis, Perkumpulan Seni Indonesia, and Solidaritas Perempuan, Artists and writers who have become involved include: Ken Zuraida, Dolorosa Sinaga, Edi Haryono, Rully Johan, Arswendy Nasution, Zaenal Abidin Domba, Happy Salma, Jajang C. Noor, Dewi Djaja, Umi Lasmina, and Lilik Munafidah. The Nyai Ontosoroh Project is the joint effort of many groups and individuals.

The Nyai Ontosoroh Project’s activities

“Nyai Ontosoroh” will be performed this year as part of the commemoration of Human Rights Day and Indonesian Women’s Day, which fall in December. It will also be performed to commemorate Kartini Day in April, 2007. The movement for human rights and for women’s rights cannot be separated from the history of the Indonesian peoples struggle.

The play will be performed in 13 regions in Indonesia by 13 different theatre groups. The towns where it will be performed are Padang, Lampung, Jakarta, Bandung, Semarang, Solo, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Denpasar, Pontianak, Mataram, Makassar and Kendari. These performances will take place between December 2006 and April 2007. The Jakarta performance will take place in April 2007.

In addition to the actual performances, the project will also organize a series of public forums and workshops. These will aim to gain an even broader hearing for the cultural concepts being advocated by the project as well as to extend the projects networks. These public events will look at the place of women in the literary works of Pramoedya Ananta Toer; at the role of women in contemporary literature and in cultural struggles; at the relevance of the issues raised by “Nyai Ontosoroh” for the contemporary women’s rights movement, and for the struggle for Indonesian national sovereignty, among others.

The Jakarta performance

The play will be performed in the Graha Bhakti Budaya Taman Ismail Marzuki in April 2007. The actors performing in the play will include:

Happy Salma, Ine Febriantiy Jajang C. Noor, Maryam Supraba, Zaenal Abidin Domba, Arswendi

Nasution, Edi Haryono, David Chalik, Kurt Kaler, Margesti, Teuku Rifnu Wikana Rosya, Detty A., Kanatsky Abdulin, Bierien, Oim Said, Jheni Rinjo, Indah Miatwuri, Dadi Zaim M., M. Fadli, Falencia Hutabarat, Ayi Aslinda, Yulia Evina Bhara, Nindy, Ega, Marco Ellwein.

Artistic team:

Writer of adaptation: Faiza Mardzoeki Director: Ken Zuraida Artistic director: Dolorosa Sinaga Astrada: Edi Haryono, Didy Anggawy, Fransisca Ardina Hermawi, Agus Herman Susanto Musica director: Rully Johan Choreographer: Noverita Lighting: Wismono Wardono Sound Engineer: Totom Qodrat Stage Manager: Harris Barong Eneste Assistant Stage Manager: Dimas Amboro Property: DS Priyadie Bonnie Graphic Design: Donny Verdian dan Ardian Sukmaji

PRODUCTION TEAM

Executive Producers Warsito Ellwein, Ayi Bunyamin, Myra Diarsi, Agung Yudha, Yeni Rosa Damayanti Regional Coordination : Ripana Puntrasa, Gunawan Wibisono Production Manager: Dewi Djaja Assistant Manager: Umi Lasmina Financial Manager: Irina Dayasih Finance Staff: Sri Gati dan Siti Ruroch Publicity Manager: Yulia Evina Bhara Publicity Team: Andreas Harsono, Wawan Public Relations: Happy Salma, Jajang C. Noor, Astuty Ananta Toer Public Forums Coordinator: Vivi Widyawaty Workshops: Agung Yudha Webmaster: Eko Bambang Subiyantoro Documentation: Lilik Munafidah, Billy Bachtiar, M. Haris, Adrian Mulia Secretariat: Esther Rini Pratsnawati, Sabine Muller, Rahmawati Basri Producers: Faiza Mardzoeki dan Andi K. Yuwono

HOW ARE WE FUNDING THE PROJECT?

THE NYAI ONTOSOROH PROJECT is being funded totally by donations from sympathetic organisations and individuals. The coalition organising the project is ACTIVIST based and relies mainly on voluntary or semi-voluntary labour. None of the organising groups or individuals have access to large funds of their own.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

The NYAI ONTOSOROH PROJECT needs your support urgently. This is an epic project involving 13 theatre groups throughout Indonesia and a national performance scheduled for Jakarta with a team of 75 publicity, administrative as well as artistic workers.

There are large costs: rehearsal venue and logistics (including food and water for the performers); publicity materials; running a secretariat and many others.

If your group likes this project, then we hope you will do more than just come to the performance. Become an institutional or individual sponsor. Make a donation to the project. We accept donations from all around the world. Pramoedya Ananta Toer is an international writer and the struggle for women's liberation and human rights in Indonesia is part of an international struggle.

Support theatre in Indonesia!

Support our campaign!

Donate now!

TO:

BCA, KCP WOLTER MONGINSIDI

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Contact:

Producers: Faiza Mardzoeki (081382047370), Andi K.Yuwono (0811182301)

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