

WAYANG GAJAH MADA IN VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS: Research-Based Innovation of Javanese Puppetry and its Reception in the Academic and Artistic Environments

Rudy Wiratama¹, Sindung Tjahyadi²

¹ Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta

¹ Email: dhadhaptulak90@gmail.com

² Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta

² Email: sindungtjahyadi@ugm.ac.id

ABSTRACT

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20111/terob.v14i2.68>

*Correspondensi: Rudi Wiratama¹, Sindung Tjahyadi²

¹Email: ddhadhaptulak90@gmail.com

² Email : sindungtjahyadi@ugm.ac.id

Received:28-04-2024

Accepted:30-04-2024

Published:06-05-2024



Terob Journal is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

Copyright: © 2024 by the authors.

Wayang Gajah Mada (WGM), named after its main character and also the initiator university, was one of a few Javanese puppetry which used historical chronicles as its repertoire. This genre of wayang was designed from 2017 and has been performed several times both inside and outside the Universitas Gadjah Mada with various formats, from pakeliran multimedia to a conventional pakeliran semalam (all-night performance). Aside of its particular repertoires that depicted the biography of Mahapatih Gajah Mada, the team of Universitas Gadjah Mada also designed a special figures for the performances, which formed a new kind of puppet genre. The challenge began when it came publicly through many occasions, such as FGDs, national seminar, and the performances themselves. As a new puppet genre, both in visual and performance terms, the WGM have to proof its relevancy and significance to both of the academic and artistic societies, so it could guarantee its own sustainability for a long time. This article aims to answer: (a) what is the main concept of WGM both in visual and performative

context, and also (b) how was the reception of both academic and artistic environments concerning the creation of this new puppet. Using the interview and observation methods, this article finds that WGM having a "Nusantara" concept both in visual and performative ways, and it received a good receptions from both academic and artistic environment which used the puppets in their performances. But despite of these positive reviews, it needs to struggle for its continuity in the future.

Keywords: Wayang Gajah Mada, Shadow Puppet, Innovation, Reception, Nusantara

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian *wayang* or puppets has been awarded World Masterpiece of Intangible and Oral Heritage for Humanity by UNESCO since November 7th, 2003, which date was commemorated by its government as National Puppetry Day (*Hari Wayang Dunia*). Rooted back to prehistoric ages, *wayang* has been considered as one of ten particular characteristics of indigenous Indonesian culture by ethnologist JLA Brandes (1878).

Aside of its “animist” origin, according to Western spectacle, *wayang* proven to be accomodative to foreign influences, beginning with the adaptation of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* epics since 10th century, the spread of 16th century *Sufi* teachings through *Wali*-enhanced *wayang* performances, until the use of *wayang* to support the developmentalism ideology embraced by Soeharto’s New Order (1966-1998) (Pemberton, 1994; see also Haryono, 2008, and Hinzler, 1981). The flexibility of *wayang* itself made this kind of performing art durable through a long span of time, and it is a form of a resilient art against the drastic religion, ideology, and political shifts occurred in Indonesia,

particularly in Java.

The *National Geographic Indonesia* magazine has recorded that until 2013, there were only 25 genres of *wayang* survived, while the other 75 has been extincted or nearly vanished due of their lack of popularity. On the other hand, the emergence of new *wayang* genres still happened until now, although many of these creations are only performed annually in *Hari Wayang* events without any chances to be recognized publicly.

Along with time, the repertoires of *wayang* genres has been expanded largely, from Indian epics and local mythology, to world classic literatures (such as *wayang wahyu* from Old Testament or *wayang Gilgamesh* from Mesopotamian poetry) and historical chronicles. In Indonesia itself, the effort to make historical chronicles as *wayang* repertoires has begun in the post-Majapahit days. Raffles (1817) in his *magnum opus*, “History of Java”, observed that the two other popular genres of *wayang* besides *wayang purwa*, which are *wayang gedhog* and *wayang klithik*, took their role as a mean to preserve “the legendary history”, so the Javanese --according to Raffles-- could keep in contact with

their ancestor's greatness, which was said to be decreased after the Islamic conquest of Majapahit Empire. After the occurrence of *wayang gedhog* and *klithik*, Mangkunagara IV (1853-1881) during the peak of his reign created *wayang madya* which performed the story of older Javanese "legendary history" kings such as Jayabaya from Kadiri and Sri Gatayu (which Mangkunagara VII identified as Airlangga) from Medangkamulan (Sajid, 1981; Drewes, 1974). Another later innovation, which came from a lesser nobleman named Raden Mas Danuatmaja from Surakarta, brought to life in 1894, named *wayang dupara* ("the peculiar *wayang*"), which told stories about Javanese chronicles according to *Babad Tanah Jawi* manuscripts, spanning from the Majapahit kings to the Diponegoro War in 1825-1830 AD (Kats, 1924)). The other innovations came forward such as PARINDRA (Partai Indonesia Raya)'s *wayang Jawa* in 1936 and Raden Mas Sajid's *wayang revolusi* in 1940s, which also recounted about Indonesian history from pre-colonial to post-independence struggles.

The creation of history-themed *wayang*, as long as its recorded, has

been simultaneously done by various artists, but those experiments never enjoyed popularity in the Indonesian society, which recognized *wayang purwa* better.

In 2016, the Universitas Airlangga (UNAIR) in Surabaya held an initiative to create *wayang Airlangga*, which recounted the life story of 11th century Javanese king Airlangga, whose name also became the university's identity. Two scholars and alumni of this university, who are Dr. Bambang Tjahjadi and Dr. Sri Teddy Rusdi, created their own versions of *wayang Airlangga*, each of them in Yogyakarta and Surakarta-based *wayang* iconography and dramaturgy. The occurrence of *wayang Airlangga* only happened in 2016, with a competition of *lakon* writing and a performance by Ki Bambang Suwarno from Surakarta in its *dies natalis* reception night. After this occasion, this kind of *wayang* rarely performed. A performance using *wayang Airlangga* happened in Solo's town hall (*Balaikota*) in 2019 with the same puppeteer, but after that it seems that the further development of this genre is unknown.

The temporary success of *wayang Airlangga* gained some attention from

the other universities, including Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta. Learning from the unsustainable fate of *wayang Airlangga*, the team initiated by Lafinus (*Laboratorium Filsafat Nusantara--Archipelago Philosophy Laboratory*) and *Pusat Kajian Filsafat Wayang* (Centre for *Wayang Philosophy Studies*), Faculty of Philosophy, trying to design the history-based *wayang* genre through research to be a sustainable performance. Referring to a famous Majapahit Empire prime minister's name, *Mahapatih Gajah Mada*, which is also inspired the first president of Indonesia, Soekarno, to give the name to this university, this *wayang* genre was designed to be known as "*wayang Gajah Mada*", instead of *wayang Majapahit* or *wayang Pararaton* which actually also proper names for this new shadow puppet.

The puppets then provided with the internal resources involving lecturers, students, and alumni which has a capability to design, carve, and coloring special shadow puppets for the prototype, which later evolved to its present form today. Despite of the effort to visualize the ideas about

wayang Gajah Mada characters, the discourse also started about the proper manner in performing this new kind of shadow puppetry, and how to guarantee its sustainability and recognition, both in academic and artistic environments. As we have known already, the tension below the process of forming and performing the new *wayang Gajah Mada* is more dense than *wayang Airlangga*, because it was born in the tradition-influenced Yogyakarta atmosphere, while on the other side the heterogeneity of the *civitas academica* also have to be accommodated through this new genre, so the *wayang Gajah Mada* (WGM) would widely known and sustainable.

Those problems leading us to the research questions below:

- a. *What concept which was mainly used in both WGM's visual and performative contexts?*
- b. *How was the reception of both academic and artistic environment concerning the creation of this new puppet genre?*

Both of those questions would be answered through this article, using the methods below.

METHODOLOGY

The creation of *WGM* was research based, which involved both scientific and artistic approaches, which could be explained below:

- (a) The first step of creating *WGM* started with producing the pilot puppets which would be used as the prototype to be presented in the front of *civitas academica* through the focused group discussion (FGD)
- (b) The recommendations obtained via the FGD then collected and used to evaluate the visual form of *WGM*, and also beginning to design the performative form of this puppet genre
- (c) The pilot performance being prepared to be exhibited in a larger scope national seminar (*seminar nasional*), which officially launched *WGM* to the general audiences
- (d) Initiating incidental performances in local, regional, and national events to gain more reactions and feedback which could be used for further development.

This research took place in Yogyakarta, Solo, and Jakarta starting from 2018 to 2022. It involved the

role of *wayang* scientists, professional and amateur puppeteers, *gamelan* composer, and the spectators from general viewers and Universitas Gadjah Mada students.

The steps of introducing and developing *WGM* could be explained as in below:

- a. The first *wayang* prototype designed through the discussion of Sindung Tjahyadi (lecturer, now served as Director of Students Affair in this university) with Rudy Wiratama (postgraduate student, now lecturer in Javanese Program of Faculty of Cultural Science) with Balinese 16th century *wayang gambuh* as the main inspiration. The reason behind this first design mainly consider the historical background regarding those puppets. Although Hinzler (1981) suggested that it came to Bali from Java through the conquest of Blambangan (Banyuwangi nowadays) by a Buleleng king, Gusti Panji Sakti, in 17th century, but a local *babad* mentioned that a Balinese vassal king of Majapahit received a set of *wayang gambuh* from Java in year 1455 AD (Indonesia, 1999).

The main characteristics of *wayang gambuh*, which are using pastel colors applied to the puppet's body and face, and also the mainly gold-colored accessories, adopted into the form of Javanese *wayang*. The size of this prototype *wayang* was between 45 and 55 centimetres, which was a normal size of conventional Javanese *wayang gedhog*. In this stage, the main figure of Gajah Mada designed with the form of *gagahan* (robust) character resembling Panji Kartala from *Panji* cycle and Bima from *Mahabharata*. Another reason of this depiction is the statement of Agus Arismunandar (2010) that the Kartala and Bima statues of 14th- 15th centuries East Java might symbolized the spirit of Gajahmada, who has been deified after his death in 1365 AD.



Picture 1. the prototype of Gajah Mada figure in first generation WGM, designed by Rudy Wiratama.

The *gagah* form of Gajah Mada figure also inspired by the old *wayang krucil* of Kasultanan Yogyakarta collection, which depicted Gajah Mada in a figure resembling Bima. But in the *wayang krucil* repertoires, this figure was not the same character with historical Gajah Mada, since he is considered as a grand vizier of Brawijaya V, who was also died during the 1478 AD siege initiated by Islamic Demak army.



Picture 2. Gajah Mada in traditional wayang *krucil* of Kasultanan Yogyakarta. It was depicted without prominent signifier of Bima iconography such as *kuku pancanaka* and *gelang candrakirana* (photo by Christopher Dewa Wardana)

The wayang figures produced as the prototype for WGM then presented in front of internal *civitas academica* in the focused group discussion (FGD) in Lafinus, Faculty of Philosophy, in April 25th, 2018.

- b. After receiving the suggestions of Professor Timbul Haryono (from Archaeology Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences) and Bambang Suwarno (Institut Seni Indonesia Surakarta--alumnus of Postgraduate School UGM), WGM then developed to a further form. Both of them

suggested that the wayang should be made in wayang *purwa* conventional size of Yogyakarta or Surakarta style, so the tall stature of Gajah Mada, which was said to be the 'incarnation' of Bima, could be explicitly depicted and the local viewers could easily understand the characteristic. The second generation of WGM also suggested to use different body and face colors, which resembles the central Javanese modern wayang conventions, so the characteristic could more prominently achieved through the significant colors of face, that traditionally considered as a symbolism of the temperament and psychological nature of a certain person (for further reading, see Mellema, 1954). The production of next generation of WGM followed with the test-performance held in Solo, at the *sanggar* or the workshop of Bambang Suwarno. The first public appearance of WGM happened in a *Ruwahan* or community feast in Islamic-Javanese month *Ruwah* before Ramadan, with the story *Gajah*

Mada Lahir (The Birth of Gajah Mada), but the local audience still give a little response about the new *wayang*, because they have accustomed with the much popular *wayang purwa*.

- c. WGM then being introduced to a larger audience through a national seminar held in University Club, Universitas Gadjah Mada, in November 14th, 2019. Along with the seminar, the better-prepared performance entitled *Gajah Mada Kridha* (“The Deeds of Gajah Mada”) being played by Bambang Suwarno in a one hour format *pakeliran padat* (condensed *wayang* performance). The audience, which largely came from academic society demanded a much careful treatment to the Majapahit theme, because they are aware that the *Nusantara* context have been changed from the age of Gajah Mada to the present Indonesian era: if in the Majapahit era the term *Nusantara* associated with political supremacy of the vassal kingdoms of Archipelago through military campaigns, the

Nusantara today must be reinterpreted in a much coexistent meaning of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (“Unity in Diversity”, the national motto of Indonesia). The performers also need to take care of some controversial issues, such as *Sunda* episode which until now could potentially trigger primordial sentiments between Javanese and Sundanese people.

- d. The next step of WGM dissemination took place in virtual rooms, due to the COVID-19 pandemics. In May 2021, WGM was introduced to Solo-based young puppeteers group *AMARTA* in their virtual performance, that took place in late chairman of PEPADI (Persatuan Pedalangan Indonesia-Indonesian Puppeteers Union) H. Kondang Sutrisno’s studio in Cileungsi, West Java. The figures and story of WGM has involved in the colossal performance entitled *Ratu Adil* (“the Just King”), which combined conventional *wayang* performance with collective shadow play (generally known with term “*SANDOSA*” in the

circle of Solonese artists) and theatrical acts. The presence of WGM occupied the second part of play, which recounted the Javanese turmoil during the fall of Singasari (1292 AD) to the famous Gajah Mada's vow *Sumpah Palapa* (1331 AD).



Picture 3. The “*SANDOSA*” part of colossal wayang performance entitled *Ratu Adil* (“The Just King”), production of AMARTA in 2021. The picture showed the scene of Ra Kuti (most left), the rebel, who enjoyed the pleasure in Majapahit palace after the banishment of Jayanegara

This performance then also being aired in national television station (TVRI) and also cable television channel “*Jowo Channel*” few weeks later, and receiving various feedbacks from the wider audiences. Some of them still feel “uncomfortable” seeing historical figures, that they used to watch in live-action movies, depicted with flat wayang puppets. The other audiences appreciated the performance, commenting that studying history “would be fun” if

using the means of performing arts, especially wayang.

The success of the colossal wayang performance involving WGM in 2021 inspired the other performances in following years. WGM also invited in a wayang festival held by Sukisno (lecturer of Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, also a professional puppeteer and gamelan composer) in his residence in Manisrenggo, Klaten, in November 2022, playing the episode of *Ra Kuti Mbalela* (“the Rebellion of Ra Kuti”), which focused on the heroic deeds of Gajah Mada in his early career. In December 2022, the university held two separated performances of WGM in the *dies natalis* reception night. The first performance took the prequel story of *Bangun Majapahit* (“the Rise of Majapahit”), played in *SANDOSA* format by the group of student's art unit (*Keluarga Kesenian Mahasiswa*) UGM. The second play presented by a renowned puppeteer from Solo, Purbo Asmoro, with the story *Banjaran Gajah Mada* (“the Life of Gajah Mada”). Following the performances, the university planned to make the annual appearance of WGM in any faculty or university *dies natalis*, but due to the busy schedule of the

Keluarga Kesenian Mahasiswa, it could not fully realized until this year (2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The observation about the existence of *WGM* as a research-based innovation in puppetry showed that in both field of visual and performance aspects of this new *wayang* genre, *WGM* received various responds, from the positive to the negative one.

The responds about the visual aspect of *WGM* indicated that the audience from the academic environment asked the creators to embrace the more “conventional” Yogyakarta or Surakarta style of *wayang* visual art instead of using the rare *wayang* idioms such as *wayang beber* or *wayang beber*, in order to emphasize the characteristic of the main figures of *WGM*. As a result, the second and third generation of *WGM* has a bigger size of *gagahan* figures, which directly followed the standards of *wayang purwa*. The examples are: the figures of Patih Gajah Mada enlarged into the size of normal Bima puppet from *wayang purwa*, and their face mainly colored with black, which symbolize resoluteness and

strength according to Javanese paradigm. The later development stage of *WGM* have also been requested for not “too Yogya or too Solo”, and as a result, there are some adaptation of ornaments and motifs from Cirebon, East Java, and Balinese *wayang* in the next stage *WGM*. This is also beneficial in explicitly depict the various ethnicity of some characters, since the life story of Gajah Mada also involving his journey in conquering surrounding kingdoms in Java and *Nusantara* archipelago. One of a good example about this phenomenon could be seen in the figures of Sunda king and his subjects, which could be instantly recognized from their *sobrah* headdresses, similar with Cirebonese *topeng* dance headdress.



Picture 4. The WGM figure of a Sundanese *Patih*, Larang Agung, with a typical *sobrah* headdress and the face resembling Cirebonese *Klana* type of mask.

The discussion with academic viewers also urged the creators to design some special figures to depict certain *wandas* or “moods” of the main characters, each of which represented a change in emotion, age, or status. Until 2024, there are at least 4 *wandas* of Gajah Mada as a main character, which are:

1. Gajah Mada *wanda Bekel*, for the early ages of Gajah Mada. The first *wanda Bekel* with smaller size (see Picture 1) then used as a substitute (*srambahan*) for a minor *Bhayangkara* character, usually named as Gajah Geger. The second *wanda Bekel* has bigger size, which encourages the

puppeteer to interpret the character of Gajah Mada referring to *wayang purwa*’s Bima

2. Gajah Mada *wanda Senapati*, with dark purple body and face, used in battle scenes.
3. Gajah Mada *wanda Mahapatih*, with royal attire, used to depict Gajah Mada as a prime minister
4. Gajah Mada *wanda Muksa*, in an ascetic’s costume used to depict Gajah Mada in his last days (after his dismissal from the prime minister’s office)

The other figures that also have more than one *wanda* are the figure of Raden Wijaya, with *wanda Satriya* and *wanda Prabu*, and also Hayam Wuruk, with *wanda Lare* and *wanda Binathara*, which both of them represent different age and change of status from a young noble to a king.



Picture 5. The comparison of second generation *WGM*'s Patih Gajah Mada (front) and *wayang purwa*'s Bima (back)

The creation of various *wayang* figures of *WGM* also responded in various ways by the artistic audiences. Purbo Asmoro, who played the all-night performance of *WGM* in 2022, for example, implicitly rejecting the depiction of Jayanagara, the second king of Majapahit, which use the reference (*guru wanda*) of Lesmana Mandrakumara, the crown prince of Astina in *wayang purwa*. The reason behind the choice of using this *guru wanda* was the *Pararaton* narrative which described Jayanagara with a weak, ill-natured manner. Hence, in this manuscript he was also nicknamed *Kalagemet* ('the weak villain') (Kriswanto, 2009).

Purbo Asmoro stated that the form of Jayanagara which referred to Lesmana Mandrakumara was unacceptable, since he is a great Majapahit king. So, instead of using the official figure designed as Jayanagara in *WGM*, he insisted to use Raden Wijaya *wanda Binathara* figure to substitute it (interview, December 2022).

The criticism on *WGM* in the academic field also happened in the matter of its performance. Despite of its first design to apply *wayang gedhog* dramaturgy in this new *wayang* genre performance, the FGD in April 2018 also suggested *WGM* to find a way to make the performance easier to understand by a wider context of audiences, not only from Yogyakarta or Surakarta style background, but generally for all Indonesians are welcome to enjoy this new genre of shadow puppetry. Thus, the FGD resolved that the style of *WGM* performances should be under the scope of "*gagrak Nusantara*" or "national style", which combined the performative idioms from various genres of *wayang* (*purwa*, *gedhog*, *golek*, *krucil*) with a vast range of regional styles (Yogya, Solo, Banyumas, Bali, East Javanese, and

others) to prevent a primordial or chauvinist sentiment which could potentially emerged.

Aside of the suggestions and criticisms from the academic audiences of *WGM*, the emergence of this *wayang* genre also triggered some creative works to develop and enrich the performances. The journey of artistic responses concerning *WGM* could be traced back on some performances, beginning with the first public performance in Sangkrah, Solo, which still relied on the mixture of *wayang purwa* and *wayang gedhog* conventions. The following public performance in University Club using the repertoire of *wayang golek menak*, which sparked criticism from Sukisno, who stated that the new genre should be accompanied with a brand new gamelan repertoires too, which in his opinion “should be East Javanese enough” (interview, September 2022). The criticism resulted with the composition of new gamelan repertoires which involved the elements of *Jawa Timuran* melodies in its *srepeg* and *sampak* pieces, to make it different with normal Surakarta and Yogyakarta style.

The next performance, which use

the format of *Sandos* prepared with only a little time after the *Hari Wayang Event*, involving the role of two musical director that came from students, Rizky Widia Fathurrahman (Banyumas) and Affan Akbar (Yogyakarta), who then inserted some elements from Balinese *Topeng Keras*, East Javanese *Alas Kobar*, and also Central Javanese *Sekaten* and *Bedhayan* pieces. Meanwhile, Purbo Asmoro separately prepared his own repertoires for all-night performance format, which explored further to Balinese *Janger* and Sundanese *wayang golek Sunda* pieces, to accompany some scenes related to each region.

In the term of a *pakem* or guidebook for storytelling, the university still not release a certain official version to recount the life and deeds of Gajah Mada, since many classic and modern literatures still dispute about it. Even though he was a popular figure among Indonesian society and considered as a pioneer of Archipelago’s unification (which is also the main idea of modern state Indonesia), but different with the kings and queens of Rajasa lineage, his origin is still obscure and opening many possibilities of interpretation.

The university team themselves used at least four main sources as a guideline to build *lakons* or repertoires used in WGM performances, which includes *Pararaton*, *Nagarakretagama*, the Majapahit serial of Slamet Muljana, and Agus Arismunandar's work on Gajah Mada's political biography. The later source hold an important role to design the main character of Gajah Mada, which was Bima-based and considered as one of illegitimate grandson of Kertanegara, the last king of Singasari, which makes him deserved to do some heroic deeds in bringing Majapahit to its glory days.

In the other hand, the freedom that offered by the team to independently interpret the story have made Purbo Asmoro struggled to compose a proper *lakon*, and he stated that he had to be more careful (*luwih ngati-ati*), since the main character of this *lakon* is a national hero, a historical figure, and also an inspiration for the university's ideology (interview, December 2022). Beside being sent Arismunandar's book by the team, which he found "too heavy" since it was a philo-archaeological work, he also referred to Langit Kresna

Hariadi's pentalogy novels, *Gajah Mada*, which were "easier to imagine".

The success of the WGM performances also attracted some attention from the other puppeteers. Cahyo Kuntadi, a popular Solo-based puppeteer, performed the *Babad Majapahit* ("the Establishment of Majapahit") story in his virtual channel on *Youtube* platform (2020). Ardhi Purboantono, a young puppeteer from Malang, also performed a biography of Gajah Mada, but with an alternative version composed by the late NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) scholar, Agus Sunyoto, who stated that Madali, or the young Gajah Mada, was the son of Tribhuwaneswari, a queen of Raden Wijaya (1292-1309), who have been born during the exile in Lamongan. The performance held in January, 2024, in Lamongan, East Java, as a part of a local festival.

From those phenomena, we could see that a research-based innovation of *wayang* genre need a serious effort to disseminate it to the society, and also to keep its sustainability for a long time. The team realized that this *wayang* genre did not emerged from a homogenous cultural background,

since Universitas Gadjah Mada is a national university and it has to stand above all primordial interests, so it could be harder to manifest it in a single monolithic style. The concept of *gagrak* Nusantara, proven to be effective to accommodate almost all cultural backgrounds into it, although there are also an opinion that urged WGM to appear publicly with much “*Ngayogyan*” (Yogyakarta-styled) visual and performative modes.

The *gagrak* Nusantara itself also a term coined by Sindung Tjahyadi, the project director of WGM, that pushed the style combination further: a classical Solo-based puppeteer could adopt the elements of West Javanese *wayang golek Sunda* in his performance, and also young puppeteers from Yogya could appreciate musical pieces from Bali and East Java, as a result of *gagrak* Nusantara heterogeneous repertory choices. The term *gagrak* Nusantara also opened a further possibility: a post-graduate student of UGM even requested that at some times WGM could be also performed in the *odalan* (temple anniversary) of Hindu temple Sanatanagama in the campus’ complex (I Made Christian Rediana Wiranata, interview on April 2024).

Various feedback emerged both from academic and artistic audiences, which responded the creation of WGM as a research-based *wayang* innovation with critical comments and artistic responds, whether it involved the tailor-made WGM figures or using the other substitute puppets (*wayang srambahan*) to portray the historical chronicle of the legendary Majapahit prime minister. While some scholars still doubted for WGM’s sustainability, Bambang Suwarno emphasized that *wayang* as an “Eastern” performing art should be opened as a collective medium of creativity, different with “Western” arts that he viewed as an “individual” art. Therefore, he suggested that the WGM, both in term of its *wayang* figures collection and chances to perform, should be opened for all of *civitas academica* who are interested to explore and appreciate it (interview, October 2020). Without the open-mindedness of the university team, he believed that this new *genre* of *wayang* would not be long-lasting.

The collective work of UGM’s *civitas academica*, which consisted of lecturers, alumni, and students in developing WGM has proven to internalize the sense of belonging

(*raos handarbeni*) of the *wayang genre*, so it was once become a mascot in 2020 orientation week opening, which been held virtually. The closeness of WGM with image of UGM as an educational institution, made some professional artist feel hesitant to criticize and developing it, because they expected that there is an official guideline (*pakem*) which could not being criticized about the *wayang* and *lakons*. But in the other hand, realizing the collective nature of Eastern art, some other artists, especially one who has some emotional and historical relationship with UGM (Sukisno is a mentor of UKJGS--the Surakarta-style unit of student artists and Purbo Asmoro himself was a graduate student of UGM) encouraged themselves to "complete" WGM with their own reinterpretation.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of *Wayang Gajah Mada* as a new genre of *wayang kulit*, which came from a research-based nature surely facing many challenges to gain recognition from wider audiences, and also to keep its sustainability as a work of art that expected to deliver the UGM-ness

value (*Nilai-nilai Kegajahmadaan*) through the epithet of Gajah Mada's life and deeds through *wayang* performance medium.

The first challenge, concerning with the sensitive issue of *gagrak*, could be solved with encouraging the performances to embrace *gagrak Nusantara*, which adapted many regional artistic expressions, which sometimes could go beyond the conventional boundaries.

The second challenge, which dealt with the sustainability and recognition of this new *wayang* genre, effectively answered by opening possibilities for another reinterpretation, as long as it is on the same corridor with the main purpose of this *wayang*'s creation. It resulted the evolution for *wayang* figures, that made the figures settled in its present form. The freedom that offered to the reinterpreters as an *implied reader* or *superreader* to make new performances also encourages them to make their own *sanggit* (plot innovations) on WGM, which were not viewed as a violation, but rather as attempt to enrich the WGM itself while it is also developing the *raos handarbeni* of the interpreters.

REFERENCES

- Arismunandar, Agus (2008). *Gajah Mada: Biografi Politik*, Depok:Komunitas Bambu
- Harsrinuksmo, Bambang (1998). *Ensiklopedi Wayang Indonesia*, vol. I:a-b, Jakarta: SENAWANGI
- Haryono, Timbul (2008). *Seni Pertunjukan dan Seni Rupa dalam Perspektif Arkeologi*. Solo: ISI Solo Press
- Hinzler, HIR. (1981). *Bima Swarga in the Balinese Wayang*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff
- Pemberton, John F., (1994), *On the Subject of Java*. Ithaca and London: Oxford University Press
- Raffles, Thomas Stamford (1817). *The History of Java*. London: Black, Parbury, and Allen, for John Murray.
- Sajid (1981). *Ringkasan Sejarah Wayang*. Jakarta: Pradnya ParamitaDrewes, G. W. J. (1974). *Ranggawarsita, the Pustaka Raja Madya and the wayang madya*. In *Oriens extremus* (Vol. 21, Issue 2). JSTOR.
- Indonesia, S. N. P. (1999). *Ensiklopedi Wayang Indonesia*. In *(No Title)*.
- Kats, J. (1924). *Ringgit Madya*. Pusaka Djawi.
- Pemberton, J. (1994). *On the Subject of" Java"*. Cornell University Press.
- Sajid, R. M. (1981). *Ringkasan Sejarah Wayang*. In *Jakarta: Pradnya Paramita*.
- Drewes, G.W.J. (1974). *Ranggawarsita, Pustaka Raja Madya, and the Wayang Madya*, *Orient Extremus*, vol. 21 (2),199-215.
- Kats, J. (1924). *Ringgit Madya*, in *Pusaka Djawi*, vol. 8/9, 184-187.