



Exploration of Ndikkar and Tortor's Movements in the Performance *Before I Forget You Pt I*

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ABSTRACT

*This article discusses how to use basic cultural body movements as basic material in creating the performance *Before I Forget You Pt I*. This performance is one of the repertoires from Aka Bodi Theater which is being performed at the Jong Batak Arts Festival in 2023. This performance is the result of a collaboration between young artists The city of Medan carries a diversity of cultural identities, from the initiator to the performer, so the basic body materials used are also diverse. Specifically, this article discusses how to explore the basic movements used, such as the Ndikkar movement from the Karo ethnic group and the Tortor movement from the Toba Batak ethnic group. This research uses qualitative research methods to find an in-depth understanding of the process of creating the work. Therefore, the results of this research will be related to the process of exploring Ndikkar and Tortor's movements in the *Before I Forget You Pt I* performance.*

KEYWORDS

Body Movements
Performance
Ndikkar
Tortor

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INTRODUCTION

Aka Bodi Theatre (ABT) is a theater group from Medan City which was founded in 2017 in Padang Panjang City. Along with the move of its founder to Medan City, the group also moved to Medan City in 2019. The name Aka Bodi itself is taken from the *Minang* language, namely *Aka* which can be interpreted as "root" and "reason" while *Bodi* is taken from the name of one of the *Minang* tribes. the meaning corresponds to "mind". Thus, it can be concluded that the name Aka Bodi itself is a group that bases its artistic activities on the 'roots' or cultural identity of each of its members and on the ethical truths they believe in (Rahmatika: 2023). ABT is exploring and intensively developing training programs that focus on how to use the body based on ethnicity and diversity.

On October 27-28, 2023, the *Jong Batak Arts Festival X* will be held at the *Taman Budaya Kota Medan* on Jalan Perintis Kemerdekaan. This event is one of the annual routine agendas initiated by *Rumah Karya Indonesia* as an arts management group which also focuses on cultural and youth movements. At this event, the Aka Bodi Theater group was invited as one of the performers to perform a performance entitled *Before I Forget You Pt I*. This performance was one of the long repertoires prepared by the ABT group which was divided into several parts. However, at the annual *JBAF X* event, the ABT group only performed the first part.

The *Before I Forget You Pt I* performance is a collaborative work with young Medan City artists who come from several communities who are knitted into a unified process. The author as a choreographer became a movement consultant where the movement visualization was managed by Jasen Tarigan from the *Rumah Tetamus* group. The director of this show also comes from the *Rumah Tetamus* group, namely

Anggina Putri Pohan. Meanwhile, the performers come from the Aka Bodi Theatre group who have diverse ethnic backgrounds such as *Batak Toba*, *Karo* and *Melayu*. Meanwhile, the script writing was done jointly by the performers with supervision from Ilham Rifandi as the main writer.

A theatrical performance is the fruit of activities involving creativity, feeling and intention. As an activity that combines creativity and taste, theater creation is also driven by instinct and depends on the community environment (But Muchtar, 1985: 1)

In connection with the process of working on a script together, the theme carried in this performance is "memories that last" from each performer. So, it can be said that this performance is the result of a collage of various memories that are poeticized and even dramatized to emphasize the theatrical effect. In this performance, ideas or memories from the performers roam, such as turmoil due to heartbreak, disappointment caused by the nuclear family, political dissatisfaction, and even beautiful childhood memories. Even though it seems dark thematically, for performers, a performance theme like this is considered to be a way to convey the deepest desires of the performers. Therefore, the author has the idea that performers use basic body movements that come from each performer's culture, including the *Ndikkar* movement from *Karo Ethnic* and *Tortor* from *Batak Toba Ethnic*.

In line with what was conveyed by Dahana, that theater is an open space for artists, theater is a vehicle for expressing oneself and a way of responding to conditions that occur in the place and time where one is (in Rifandi, 2023: 28). Reflecting the vision of the ABT group which promotes a diversity of cultural identities, the author uses the cultural identities of the performers. The author's background in using *Ndikkar* and *Tortor*

is because most of the performers come from the Toba and Karo Batak ethnicities.

In previous research conducted by Rifandi (2023), the Tortor tradition can be described as follows; Manortor is one of the Toba Batak vocabulary words which can be interpreted as 'to vibrate'. Tortor is also an onomatopoeic word where the word is an imitation of the sound of someone walking on a house made of wooden floors. So, the emphasis of the movement is on vibration and dynamics in movement. The basic techniques found in tortor which will later be explored in this performance are hand techniques and foot techniques. Although basically in tortor there are also head techniques, in this performance there are adjustments to the need to create movements related to the hands and feet only.

Previous research conducted by Rifandi regarding Ndikkar related to the philosophical values of Ndikkar stated that Ndikkar is a form of ancient intuition of the Karo people in responding to nature, turned into an appetizer at people's parties, traditional events, and welcoming heads of state. In this case, Ndikkar would more accurately be called a performing art rather than a martial art because functionally it is no longer used as a self-defense mechanism (Rifandi, 2021: 219).

Ndikkar can be used as an alternative in mastering an actor's physical knowledge. Good physical mastery can guide an actor in managing the actor's potential. Ndikkar has moves that overall have an integral meaning to his movements. So you will indirectly learn to feel the energy that comes from the culture of the Ndikkar owner himself. From the training of ABT performers, it was found that Ndikkar can provide physical endurance, flexibility, regular breathing, the ability to manage energy, concentration and emotional maturity.

DISCUSSION

Basically, the research is research based on a qualitative approach to theater studies proposed by Jonathan Pitches (Kershaw, 2011: 137). In this research, previous studies related to source culture are used as primary data to understand and process source culture as an idea for creating movement. The results of this research are presented in descriptive form using the 'practitioner knowledge' approach by Jonathan Pitch. In recent years, research approaches have emerged that view the training process as scientific development. This is because many researchers use practice as a methodology and Robin Nelson calls it practitioner knowledge. Through this approach, the author can describe the knowledge and performance carried out by the research object in detail and detail. With the following presentation, it is hoped that this article can comprehensively explain the working principles underlying the creation process of *Before I Forget You Pt I*.

Meanwhile, for the creation process, the author uses Alma Hawkins' movement creation approach which consists of several stages of creation. However, in this creation process the author only carried out three stages of creation, namely basic movement exploration, improvisation, and formation.

According to Alma Hawkins (2003) the creation process begins with an exploration process which starts from; (a) determine the theme of creation through story, conception. (b) think, imagine, feel, respond and interpret about the chosen theme. The second is the improvisation process (a) experiments in selecting, considering, harmonizing and differentiating, creating certain contrasts, (b) determining the integration and unity of the various experiments that have been carried out. Third, is the formation process (a) determining the form of the

creation by combining symbols resulting from various experiments that have been carried out, (b) determining unity with other parameters, such as movement with accompaniment, clothing and color. (c) giving weight to art (complexity, simplicity, diversity).

EXPLANATION

The performance *Before I Forget You Pt I* was shown on October 27 2023 at Taman Budaya Medan City. This performance is the result of collaboration between Medan City artists who come from several art groups and young artists with diverse ethnic backgrounds. This performance is also a collage of the young artist in terms of composing his movements and composing his theatrical narrative. In the creative process of creating this work, the author became a movement consultant and through this process the author chose the Ndikkar and Tortor traditions as basic bodily materials in the process of creating the performance *Before I Forget You Pt I*.

The dramatic structure of the performance *Before I Forget You Pt I* begins with the activities of a man who works as a waiter in a cafe. The man cleaned up various utensils on the table such as dirty glasses, food crumbs and spilled drinks from the table. While cleaning the table he mumbled the phrase "*before I forget you*" over and over again at a constant tempo without even any dynamics at all. At the beginning of this performance, the movements presented were realistic movements where the man was just cleaning the table with everyday movements.

Not long after, a woman entered with a normal and realistic body posture but said "*tick-tock*" repeatedly before starting a more complex narrative. In this section it can be understood that the memento phase will begin to be drawn until it appears on stage. This female character is a representation of "*time*" which the author interprets as an entity that inventories all events, or even regulates

how humans can forget an event. So the woman's presence is a sign that time has come to the man to bring two possibilities, namely: reminding him of an event or even forgetting it.

In the next scene, four people enter the cafe. The four characters chatted with each other but what was unexpected was that the conversation had nothing to do with each other. Each cafe visitor tells their own story and different problems. In this section, the exploration of movement is very clearly carried out by the performers and is carried out simultaneously with the dialogue. At the end of this scene, the male character carries a bucket of water and pours water over his body from above his head while saying the dialogue, "*all the memories warm my body until it's hot, I'm burning either because of passion or jealousy, everything is turbulent inside me.*"



Figure 1. *Before I Forget You Pt I* performance at Taman Budaya Kota Medan

The final scene of this show is the entry of a female character which is allegedly a story of the male character's past. In this meeting, the two characters both say, "*before I forget you*". Then the two figures make movements in pairs with dynamics from soft to firm movements, from uniform movements to messy movements. The ending of this show is left hanging because it will be a continuation of the show *Before I Forget You Pt I*.

Professionally, an actor's expertise or skill is something that is obtained through abstraction or in research work (Barba, 1995: 9). In the *Before I Forget You Pt I* performance, the writer and

team conducted a trial by exploring original movements from the Tortor tradition. The initial activity carried out was by doing the *Mangalo Mara* and *Patoru Diri* movements repetitively, starting with doing and following the original movements of the manortor activities. The form of this movement is stretching the arms forward while lowering the right and left hands following the tempo of the music, while to expand it the author raises his hands up. This movement is often done while making a tipping movement called the *Urdot* movement.

Body Movement Exploration

Choreography is not formed on the basis of a sequence of movements alone, but rather on the relationship and intertwining between movements and other supporting elements (Sukri, 2019: 61). The emphasis when performing this movement is to direct the energy center of the performer towards the ability to manage weight, the ability to align the body, maintain awareness, and understand the principles of size, shape and space. In the original movement in the *Manortor* tradition, this movement has weight on the legs when the perpetrator moves his hands while doing the *Urdot* movement. Based on the results of an interview with Yusnizar Heniwaty, a researcher who focuses on the study of the Batak Toba ethnicity, this movement basically means the hope of the Toba Batak people so that their future lives will be protected from danger and implies the humility of the Toba Batak people (interview, 2023). Therefore, the author interprets the exploration of the *Mangalo Mara* and *Patoru Diri* movements as a form of hope from the male character to escape his bitter memories, but on the other hand he is still opening the veil where these memories can still emerge. This movement is done by opening your hands shoulder-width apart and slowly lifting

them until they are parallel to your head. This movement is done repeatedly at a constant tempo.



Figure 2. Exploration of Mangalo Mara movement from the Tortor Tradition

Furthermore, the basic movement managed in this performance is the *Sipitu-Pitu* Step from the *Ndikkar* tradition of the Karo ethnic group. This movement is done by taking varied steps or leg movements should not be done repeatedly. Creativity is needed in choosing steps or foot movements. The front and back legs are bent into a stance while moving the body up and down while taking slow steps 7 times.

The *Sipitu-Pitu* Step Philosophy is related to the rules for stepping by considering the Karo land which consists of various contours, so you need to be careful when stepping. When doing this movement, what you need to pay attention to is that your legs must always be light. In other words, the feet should not be too planted so as not to make the steps heavier and lighten the body when swinging the body up and down. The position of the hands also follows the rhythm of the body by alternately bringing the hands forward and back.

The author reinterprets this movement by inserting how careful the male character is when making decisions and even remembering certain memories. The male character performs *Sipitu-Pitu* Steps while having a dialogue with the figures who symbolize "time".



Figure 3. Exploration of the *Sipitu-Pitu* Steps from the *Ndikkar* Tradition

The *Meteruk* step is a low stance movement used to step with the hands pointing forward. When doing this movement, thigh strength and regular breathing are needed to withstand the weight of a low stance. The physical impact felt when doing this movement is the testing of physical endurance and breathing which can drain stamina as a performer. The author uses this exploration of *Meteruk's* steps, apart from providing aesthetic needs, the movement is also a characteristic of the performers' foot movements. For example, in the second scene, where the Time characters enter the stage, they step with a modified stance typical of *Meteruk's* steps.



Figure 4. Exploration of *Meteruk* Steps from the *Ndikkar* Tradition

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Creative Process

The creative process carried out in this performance is based on the process of choreography or group composition, which can be understood as cooperative art or cooperation between dancers; Meanwhile, in choreography or solo dance, a dancer is freer to dance alone, not tied to other dancers as in group choreography (Rosalina and Yuda, 2022: 153).

The training process in creating this performance is divided into two parts, namely body training and dramatic design of the performance. The body training process is the initial training carried out to level the performer's body abilities. This initial process takes between 1-2 months. The exercise process is carried out twice a week for the body training process. The first process in this exercise is the **exploration** process; performers are given the opportunity to relearn the basic movements of *Ndikkar* and *Tortor*. After the performers have mastered these basic movements, the performers will be given the freedom to explore based on the principles of space, time and energy. Every movement made by the performers will be evaluated and recorded by the choreographer's assistant, Jasen Tarigan. After that, the author will provide input and select movements that will be used and developed by the team.

After carrying out the exploration process, the performers will be given an understanding regarding the theme of the performance so that through this understanding the performers will improvise according to the theme prepared by the dramatic team.

Improvisation work will be carried out throughout September 2023 or within a period of 1 month. The obstacles faced by performers are generally limitations in aligning the theme with the movements that have been chosen in the exploration process. However, over a long period of time, the performers have to adjust the movement or reconfigure it with the previous movement. Almost the same as the previous process, the results of the improvisation are evaluated and selected by the author to be continued in the formation process.

The **formation process** was continued by the dramatic team, namely the director, Anggina Putri Pohan. The director's job is to compose the drama based on the script that has been prepared and organize the stage composition so that it is coherent. The directing work carried out must balance the movements made by the performer with the dialogue that has been written together. The formation process also lasts for 1 month with an intensive process 4 times a week. Each exercise takes 2 hours for the stabilization process which, if accumulated, will take around 32 hours of intensive time.

ANALYSIS

Before I Forget You Pt I, which was presented at the Taman Budaya Kota Medan, was presented as an interesting collaboration between artists and young talents from Medan City who represent diverse ethnic backgrounds. The show intricately weaves together realism and symbolism, exploring the complexities of memory and time. These movements, drawn from the traditions of *Ndikkar* and *Tortor*, provide layers of nuance to the narrative, symbolizing the protagonist's struggle with bitter memories and the delicate balance between remembering and forgetting.

The incorporation of traditional movements such as the *Mangalo Mara* and *Patoru Diri* from the *Tortor*

tradition, as well as the *Sipitu-Pitu* Steps from the *Ndikkar* tradition, enriches the performance with metaphorical depth. These movements become a powerful tool for conveying the emotional and psychological state of the character. Additionally, the inclusion of *Meteruk's* steps adds aesthetic appeal and physical challenge, strengthening the players' endurance and breathing control.

The meticulous creative process, which includes body training, exploration, improvisation, and formation, emphasizes the dedication and skill of the actors. Helmed by director Anggina Putri Pohan, the seamless integration of movement and dialogue creates a visually and emotionally impactful experience. "*Before I Forget You Pt I*" invites audiences into a world where tradition, memory and time merge, engaging them with the narrative's cliff-hanging conclusion and reflecting on the rich cultural influences that shaped this captivating show.

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