When Theatre Becomes Digital: A Theoretical Implication on Theatre Study Development in Indonesia

(Ketika Teater Menjadi Digital: Sebuah Implikasi Teoretis Perkembangan Studi Teater di Indonesia)

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Abstrak

Pandemi COVID-19 adalah sebuah disrupsi dalam kehidupan manusia, dan salah satu bidang yang mengalami perubahan signifikan adalah teater. Pementasan-pementasan teater menjadi tidak aman lagi dilakukan di dalam gedung teater dengan penonton yang menyaksikan secara langsung, dan kontak fisik antara para aktor di atas panggung menjadi terbatas demi keamanan aktor sendiri. Salah satu media baru yang hadir sebagai solusi dari absennya ruang fisik untuk teater adalah ruang digital. Kehadiran teater di ruang digital tidak hanya terjadi di Indonesia, tetapi juga di dunia. Sebagai sebuah wadah, teater di dalam ruang digital memerlukan atau bahkan menghasilkan teori-teori baru. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menunjukan sejarah dan perubahan teater sampai tiba di ruang digital, serta memprediksi hasil perubahan tersebut, sebagai bagian dari cabang ilmu kajian teater dan pertunjukan. Perubahan-perubahan ini membaurkan batasan, aturan, dan teori yang memberikan jawaban atas relasi para aktor, makna tubuh fisik dan tubuh digital, panggung dan belakang panggung, identitas, ideologi, dan eksistensi ruang digital baru.

Kata kunci: media, teater, transformasi, wadah digital

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic wrought havoc across various facets of human life, inducing transformative disruptions, notably in the domain of theatre. The traditional paradigm of live indoor performances, characterized by the dynamic interactions among actors, was rendered unsafe. In response, the digital space emerged as a viable alternative, not only in Indonesia but globally. This paradigm shift necessitates and begets new theories intrinsic to theatre in the digital realm. This article traces the historical trajectory and the ensuing transformations in

digital theatre, offering insights into the anticipated outcomes of these changes within the realm of theatre and performance studies. The evolution of theatre in the digital space challenges established boundaries, rules, and theories, fundamentally altering conceptions related to actor relationships, the juxtaposition of physical and digital bodies, delineations between stage and backstage, considerations of identity, ideology, and the very essence of this nascent digital domain.

Keywords: digital space, media, theatre, transformation

INTRODUCTION

Theatre and performing arts studies ventured into a new and exciting phase during the COVID-19 pandemic. The existing theories must take on changes in the theatre industry when theatre was suddenly unable to conduct its performances on stage, indoor, in front of a live audience. Since it was a global pandemic, Indonesia was not the only country impacted by the condition; even Broadway, the center of international-level performances, was not spared. When one usher was infected by COVID-19 in March 2022, Broadway stepped into a long hiatus (Feldman 2020). Theatre institutions came up with various initiatives to keep the existence of theatre. UK National Theatre, well-equipped with the recording of their performances done for National Theatre Live, provided the public the access to some of their recorded onstage performances to fundraise for arts workers who were impacted by COVID-19 (Byrne 2021). Spaces for rehearsals and performances were closed, theatre productions were halted, including in Indonesia. At least 40,081 Indonesian artists lost their livelihood during the pandemic, and that there was only one way to survive: compromise (Safriana 2020).

The various conditions of theatre industry around the world result in theatre development pace that is different from one place to another. For countries with advanced theatre industry like the US or UK, theatre digitalization is not new and has been explored by theatre companies. This, in turn, affects the development of theatre theories in western countries. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, theatre artists are still at the very early exploration stage in utilizing digital technology. Thus, this article aims to provide a map for theatre study development focusing on its theory development. It is an academic response triggered by the changes happening in theatre brought by technology that is becoming more and more integrated into our 21st century life. These theories may help theatre artists make sense the phenomena so they can predict the changes that may influence their theatre groups, especially in Indonesia, so that Indonesian theatre can keep on evolving and creating new forms or media that are in tune with the world instead of becoming obsolete.

In this theoretical article, we mapped the theories from drama, theatre, and performance studies to figure the development and gaps between the existing theories with the current situation. All three studies are interdisciplinary even though drama studies was more monodisciplinary, yet it received influence from cultural studies in its development. Drama studies focuses on drama as a text and depends on text analysis method using literary and cultural theories. Meanwhile, the keyword for performance studies is action, bearing implication of a vast research focus; it can focus on artistic practices, ritualistic ceremonies, everyday actions and at the center of its attention is the research subject behaviors. The frequently used method is participatory action research where the researcher is also a participant in the observed activities. These activities are researched as social practice, activism, and cultural interaction (Schechner 2020). One of the pioneers of this studies, which started

since mid-1960s and further blossomed in 1980s, is Richard Schechner, a director and academic from the US (Balme 2008).

Theatre studies focuses on theatre literature and performances. The theories used are from theatre and its concentrations such as acting for actors, performance artistry, performance spaces, and related literary theories. Those elements have their own distinct boundaries and meaning. Yet, during the development of this studies, the avant-garde movement blurred these distinct lines, resulting in converging theatre studies and performance studies into the same group, focusing on the existence of human body in a medium (Fischer 2014). Scholars of theatre and performance studies deem performance as a medium that communicates a message. Therefore, some intriguing topics within these studies are communication system between actors and audience, communication between characters through movement, facial expressions, and blocking, and the interaction between the artistic elements and actors. Thus, three key topics of theatre and performance studies are actor, audience/spectator, and space (Balme 2008).

In the mid-1970s, some experts in several fields blurred the lines even further. Philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists used the term theatre, stage, tragedy, and made them keywords in their theories (Fischer 2014). This occurrence is not unusual, given that theatre studies and performance studies were nascent disciplines emerging in Western higher education during the 20th century. For this article, theatre studies and performance studies are positioned side by side to enrich each other. Since the development of digital theatre, especially during COVID-19, is emerging, the writers decided to also connect this article to digital culture. Therefore, a discussion on society and digital culture is also provided to understand the social context before criticizing the theories.

METHOD

This theoretical article adopts literature reviews (Kraus, *et al.* 2022; Rocco & Plakhotnik 2009). Relevant documents, including scholarly articles, theoretical frameworks, and other written materials, are systematically analyzed to extract key concepts, themes, and theoretical propositions. This non-systematic literature review involves the works of Walter, Wilson, Thomas, Schechner, Forrer, Barthes, and Biswas, as well as researchers who focused on Indonesian theatre, such as Yudiaryani, Cohen, and Boden, possessing a deep understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the topic under investigation. Using a deductive method, the writers explored the global context before narrowing the focus to the Indonesian context (Casula, Rangarajan, & Shields 2021; Kraus, *et al.* 2022). While the topic ranges from theatre performances to theatre in the digital space or digital theatre, Miller, Dixon, and Manuel Castell are also being examined. A conclusion will be drawn after the exploration above. This method can capture the complexities inherent in theoretical constructs. This methodology was chosen since academic writings by previous researchers in drama, theatre, and performance studies, as well as digitalization, are fundamentally needed to identify gaps and suggest the needed theory.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Theatre History
While theatre and performance studies are relatively recent in academia, the art form of theatre has ancient roots dating back to ancient Greece (500–400 BC), evolving with time and civilization. The first theatre, known as the Amphitheatre, was established in ancient Greece as

a space for religious worship and celebration for the gods, featuring performances of tragedy and comedy (Wilson & Goldfarb 2010). The thematic focus transitioned from gods-centered narratives to exploring human-god relations, psychological interactions among humans, and satire on human affairs, politics, and war. In the Medieval era, Western theatre served as a propaganda tool for the church, conveying messages about heaven, hell, good, evil, and the lives of saints (Worthen 2004). During this period, theatres were often located in churches and public spaces like markets or town hall courtyards, ensuring accessibility to the public (Thomas 2018).

The artistic development of theatre, including stage configuration, setting, makeup, and lighting, commenced during the Renaissance, particularly in Shakespeare's era. Plays during this time centered around myths and European historical figures, influencing other European countries. In the Modern era, playwrights like Calderon, Moliere, Racine, Behn, and Sor Juana marked the neo-classical era, adhering to Aristotle's *Poetics* (Worthen 2004). As Modernism thrived, theatre became a culturally valued form of entertainment. Notable works like Ibsen's *A Doll House* and Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard* exemplified modern theatre. Western theatre responded to real-life dynamics through the works of Brecht, Beckett, Pirandello, and others. In America, figures like Glaspell, O'Neill, Williams, Fornes, Shepard, Kushner, and Hwang left enduring influences with their contemporary and intricate works (Worthen 2004).

Asian drama and theatre studies were initiated post-World War II by Western scholars, dividing drama into traditional and modern forms. In Asia, India, Japan, Korea, China, and Indonesia have culturally rich performance traditions rooted in Sanskrit over 3,000 years ago. China's theatre dates to 1,000 BC, while Japan's Noh, Doll, and Kabuki shaped world theatre. Initially rooted in religious rituals, both Asian and Western theatre evolved into modern and avant-garde art forms, with the key distinction being the continued advancement of Eastern traditional theatre (Liu 2016; Swami 2020; Worthen 2004).

Indonesian theatre, a blend of traditional and modern forms, roots itself in expressions like Sendra Tari and Wayang, drawing from the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* epics (Sedana & Foley 2016). In the late 19th century, influences from Persia, particularly Komedie Stamboel, transformed traditional theatre into commercial entertainment with Western standards (Cohen 2001). Post-World War II, figures like Rustam Effendi and Sanusi Pane seamlessly merged Western theatrical conventions with tradition. During the Japanese occupation, nationalist youth groups utilized theatre to address social and political issues, facing strict script censorship. From 1950 to 1980, luminaries like W. S. Rendra, Arifin C. Noer, Teguh Karya, Putu Wijaya, and Nano Riantiarno shaped Indonesian modern theatre, fusing Western and traditional elements to preserve cultural identity amid global influences. The 1980s introduced figures like Budi S. Otong, Nano, and Ratna Riantiarno, while the 1990s saw theatre groups addressing urban community issues, pre- and post-Soeharto (Sedana & Foley 2016; Timmerman 2017). This brief journey highlights the dynamic evolution of Indonesian theatre, showcasing its adaptability amidst historical and societal changes.

Indonesian theatre is an identity known only since the 20th century as it presents dialogues on Indonesian issues (Yudiaryani 2017). It is defined as multicultural, engages with regional and national values, with notable groups like Teater Koma standing the test of time. Teater Koma, led by Nano Riantiarno, fuses Western and traditional Indonesian theatre styles, offering a versatile repertoire of drama, tragedy, and comedy. It has produced several Indonesian

influential artists such as Didi Petet, Rima Melati, and Rudjito. Before establishing Teater Koma, Nano worked on his craft with Teguh Karya's Teater Populer. Unlike Teguh Karya, who held on to Western theatre form, Nano combined his theatre with traditional Indonesian theatre style. Thus in 1977 in Jakarta, Teater Koma gave birth to a new theatre tradition in the country. It has a versatile repertoire ranging from drama, tragedy, to comedy, while using characteristics of popular theatre performance that makes it easy for the audience to follow and understand (Janarto 1997). Despite COVID-19 challenges, Teater Koma adapted by consistently producing digital performances on YouTube under #DigitalisasiKoma.

Theatre Theories in the World
The evolution of global theatre parallels advancements in theatre and performance studies, emphasizing the importance of using theories for analysis. Aristotle's *Poetics*, the earliest Western dramatic theory, introduces key concepts such as hamartia and catharsis in the context of tragedy and outlines the structure of Greek drama (Chemers 2010). Meanwhile, in the East, Bharat Muni's Bhava-Rasa theory asserts that theatre mirrors human actions, evoking a range of emotions from joy to pain, and categorizes drama based on structure (Biswas 2017). These diverse theories highlight the rich theoretical foundations that have shaped theatrical traditions globally.

The writers deem that the origin of modern theatre theories is dramaturgy. Dramaturgy is a theory that dissects structure, symbol, theme, goal, and convention of drama to prepare a dramatic script to become an artistic performance (Chemers 2010). Theories focusing on the meaning of space, just like what was written by Garner, direct attention to performer/actor's body and blocking (Fortier 2016). Theatre studies often borrows critical theories in performing its analysis. Two of the main methods and theories used are semiotics and phenomenology with Barthes, Eco, Bert O. States, and Stanton B. Garner, Jr. as significant scholars (Biswas 2017; Carlson 2007; Chemers 2010; Eco 1977; Fortier 2016; Reinelt & Roach 1992). Viewing a theatre performance as a system of signs, he identified components such as language, visuals, movement, music, and objects, emphasizing how their interaction influences their respective meanings. Scholars of phenomenology in theatre argue that emotion and interactions with situations and conditions which may be created by, and in, a theatre performance are rendered subjective/relative by semiotics (Fortier 2016). Becket's *Act Without Word* where dialogues are nonexistent can be an example. The absence of language would prohibit the use of semiotics; thus, phenomenology can be a possible solution to fathom the emotions which theatre presents as an artform that is bound by time and space (Fortier 2016).

Theories are used not only to perform analysis on theatre, but also to inspire theatre artists such as the case with Stanislavsky and his method acting, Chekhov and his works where one of which was reinterpreted by Jerry Grotowski using phenomenology theories in his staging of *Uncle Vanya*. In its evolution, semiotics plays a dual role, intersecting with challenging phenomenology and deconstruction. Within the realm of feminist theatre, semiotics serves as a potent tool, disrupting analyses reliant on psychoanalysis and reception theory to identify women's voices. Figures such as Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Helene Cixous employ semiotics to confront established narratives, contributing to a dynamic reevaluation of women's representation in the theatrical discourse (Carlson 2007).

In the expansive realm of theatre intricately entwined with the social and political fabric, Karl Marx's indelible impact on theatre studies unfolds. Walter Cohen's application of Marx's

concepts to Shakespearean dissects economic structures, inter-class relations, and the transformative forces shaping 17th-century English theatre (Fortier 2016). Bertolt Brecht, a proponent of Marxist thought, carried forward this scrutiny into 20th-century theatre, challenging norms and fostering social critique. The resonance of Marx's ideas persisted, extending to Augusto Boal, renowned for the postmodern Theatre of the Oppressed method. Boal's approach sought to leverage theatre for real-world problem-solving, encouraging spectators to become actors, actively engaging with conflicts on stage, and emphasizing theatre as a transformative arena for societal introspection (Boal 2008).

Lyotard, in theatre and performance studies, contends that theatre serves as a space for Nietzschean nihilism due to its constant interpretation and reinterpretation of reality (Lyotard, Knap, & Benamou 1976). Foucault's contributions focus on power relations, the body, and punishment within this context. This is where theatre studies started to venture into and played in the arena of performance studies. Some performance studies scholars who formulate theories of this field are Peggy Phelan, Richard Schechner, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Michael Taussig, Joseph Roach, José Munoz, and Jon Mckenzie (McKenzie 2002).

Performance studies make a crucial distinction between social and aesthetic drama, classifying activities demonstrating elements of social behavior as performance. This encompasses rituals, ceremonies, and daily habits, all enacted for public observation. Positioned at the intersection of various disciplines, performance studies engage in discourse with cultural anthropology, drawing from scholars like Victor Turner, especially in the context of social drama. This approach aligns with postmodernism's rejection of classical grand narratives, adopting a perspective where everything becomes a text or narration for analysis. The method involves examining the history of an event to trace the origin of dramatic ideas, observing practices to assess whether these ideas are translated into behaviors, and analyzing social drama to categorize the displayed actions (Shepherd & Wallis 2004).

The rise of postcolonialism, examining the repercussions of imperialism, has significantly influenced theatre studies. Edward Said's *Orientalism* scrutinizes how the West interprets the East, revealing embedded political biases (Reinelt & Roach 1992). Post-dramatic theatre works critique colonizers' impact on drama, exploring stories that dissect social conditions under colonization. Notable examples include *Kathakali King Lear*, *Ninggali* by Josie Ninggali Lawford, *Euginia* by Lorrae Parry, and Peter Brook's *Mahabharata*. Peter Brook, aligning with post-dramatic principles, challenges traditional storytelling norms. Hans-Thies Lehmann's concept, translated in 2006, spearheads a theatre movement opposing Aristotelian conventions (Biswas 2017). Visionaries like Antonin Artaud, Maria Irene Fornes, Manish Mitra, Peter Brook, and Pirandello actively defy these norms, prioritizing emotional responses over established conventions, signaling a broader shift towards innovative storytelling in theatre.

In conclusion, the development of world theatre intricately intertwines with the evolution of theatre and performance studies where multimodalities play a significant part in analyzing the work. Theatre studies can be turned into performance studies due to their connection to social drama, rituals, and cultural anthropology, showcasing the ongoing evolution of the meaning of performance. Previous studies primarily examined onsite performances, neglecting the pivotal rise of digital theatre during the COVID-19 era. Theatre companies worldwide adopted digital platforms as a survival strategy, reshaping the theatrical experience. To comprehend this shift, it

is imperative to investigate the innovative adaptations made by these companies in the face of pandemic challenges.

Digital Theatre
The evolution of digital technology in recent decades has profoundly impacted people's lives, giving rise to new cultural norms as technology becomes increasingly intertwined with daily routines. Mark Poster notes that the communication revolution has ushered in a new era of active media distinct from its predecessors (Miller 2020). Traditional media, criticized by Adorno and Horkheimer for its one-way broadcast pattern fostering passivity, contrasts with the interactive and dynamic nature of new media facilitated by the internet. This shift has transformed societal culture, fostering a more active engagement with news as individuals participate in both creating and receiving messages in a two-way communication model (Miller 2020).

New media issues are at the forefront of communication media thinkers' considerations. Lister defines new media as "digital, interactive, hypertextual, varied, and virtual," while Manovich emphasizes numeric representation, modular structure, automatization, variability, and transcoding (Miller 2020, 17). Miller seeks a synthesis, examining the technical processes of digital media nodes creation—digital, web-structured, interactive, hypertextual/hypermediated, and automatic. Digital culture's immersive nature, requiring telepresence, virtuality, and simulation, is a key focus (Miller 2020). The internet, beyond being the birthplace of digital media, transforms computers into active agents, filtering and replacing traditional communication devices. It not only births digital media but also significantly shapes the emerging new media culture in society.

Manuel Castells introduces the concept of the network society, positing that the values within this culture are intricately shaped by dominant global forces, notably capitalism (Castells 2004). Within the globalized landscape, the prevailing value worldwide establishes the value system of the network society. Whether influenced by the dynamics of global finance or perceived societal transformation, the media assumes a pivotal role as a primary source for messages and images capable of instigating paradigm shifts. Consequently, the study of digital media becomes imperative, given its profound impact on societal behaviors and cultural dynamics.

Furthermore, the characteristic of convergence in digital media significantly contributes to behavioral transformations in contemporary society. This convergence blurs the traditional distinctions between producer and consumer roles, as individuals actively share and produce content across multiple platforms. The dynamic and evolving nature of media in this context underscores a continuous state of processing and meaning creation, never settling into a static or complete form (Miller 2020).

The convergence of media, explored by thinkers such as Fuch, Fisher, Rey, and Ritzer, has led to the emergence of digital labor. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, epitomize this phenomenon, wherein users undergo a transformative shift from mere consumers to active producers, a concept commonly referred to as prosumers in scholarly discourse. This transformation is marked by the provision of news content without material compensation, creating a highly exploitative dynamic. While some argue that users find rewards in self-actualization and personal narration, the rapid and dynamic nature of digital media challenges traditional concepts of identity. Stuart Hall's notion of identity as a fluid process, no longer a static noun but a dynamic verb, becomes relevant in this context (Hall 1990).

In the field of philosophy and cultural studies, scholars such as Barthes, Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, and Guattari have significantly shaped the discourse on identity (Miller 2020). Miller's synthesis of their argument's underscores identity as a product of power dynamics and the differentiation of others. With its roots in language and susceptibility to external influences, identity undergoes construction through discourses, remains group-oriented, and undergoes variations tied to historical and geographical contexts. As a result, identity is characterized by its non-uniformity, inherent malleability, and frequent oppositional nature.

In the digital landscape, the convergence of online and offline contexts adds a compelling layer to the identity formation process. The prevalence of images, especially self-representation through photographs, plays a central role in shaping the online environment, facilitating the integration of both identities with limited room for play or decentralized identity. Research on online identity serves to either deconstruct or complement an individual's offline identity, recognizing the intricate connection between the two.

Characteristics of the digital world create a digital community with intriguing characteristics as well. The presence of digital community according to Rheingold in Miller (2020) is a compensation for the absence of the desired offline community. Agents within a digital community can enhance the social relation options they have just like how a fan receives a reply from their celebrity idol on social media, something deemed to almost never happen in offline world. In this community, agents too have greater freedom to interact compared to the offline community. Digital community does not have a quota limit on its membership, nor does it limit one's involvement in as many groups as one wishes. Digital community also provides tangible benefits for its members in the form of advancing their knowledge and social capitals. There is no limit of space or time either. This is the magic of digital world, its synchronous and asynchronous characteristics present interaction flexibility.

Digital technology that ushered in digital media may indeed influence people's perspective and behaviors through many aspects such as communication pattern, interaction characteristics, identity, power relation, new formulated production system, understanding of producer and consumer, as well as the nature of relations among social groups. Digital media's ability to penetrate a society's culture is undeniable and this makes society tightly bound with the digital media. This opens opportunities for many fields to populate the digital world, one of them is theatre.

In 1999 and 2000, Dixon researched and mapped the origin of how arts, technology, and knowledge in digital world intertwined, and published it in his book, *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art and Installation* (2007). It places the focus of digital theatre development on three main topics namely body, space, and time. While the advance of liveness theory (non-digital-mediated performances), futurism and avant-garde movement, multimedia performances, performance and technology started since 1960. This book defines digital performance in a very broad sense with just one main requirement that computer technology plays a key role in the performance's technique, aesthetic, and format; a definition shared by Masura (2020). Dixon noted that in 1993, Brenda Laurel and Rachel Strickland directed theatre's attention to history when they brought back the prehistoric setting using virtual reality (Dixon 2007).

Online performance or internet performance have also decorated internet spaces since the birth of internet, along with the development of new concepts such as virtual drama, online shows, theatre programs using the concept of chatroom, immersive storytelling technology like virtual character, AR, and VR (Dixon 2007). Digital performances are even considered loudly challenging postmodernism. Their presence shows how art presents the future and creates new space and world. They surpass postmodernism which can only whine about and criticize the world. Postmodernism turns history, soul, and grand narrative into something relative and subjective. On the contrary, digital performances place those three components within their performances. As a matter of fact, digital performances can reincarnate missing history and soul in their shows through digitally connected actions, so these elements are present together with actors' physical body just like what Merce Cunningham, Bill T. Jones, and Random Dance Company have done (Dixon 2007). Digital performance makers are future-oriented people attempting to challenge postmodernism's propaganda on how this is the end of history, time, meaning, and reality. For them, this is a new reality where technology becomes the core of production.

Existing studies only research digital theatre and post-digital theatre in the US, UK, and several European countries whose theatre is a lot more advanced compared to Indonesia. Causey's research focuses on the shift of theatre ontology, innovative technique towards 'virtual reality' by linking it to issues on control and power relation which can influence meaning (Causey 2016). Rebecca Rouse in her research concluded that digital narration and the intertwining of theatre with many forms of media make an analyze-worthy topic (Rouse 2018).

Contemporary Indonesian Theatre Studies

Contemporary Indonesian theatre as static, attributing it to the reciprocal contamination of theories and practice, where theoretical frameworks noticeably shape production processes in the theatrical domain. The dominant forms of contemporary Indonesian theatre performances are "teater kolaborasi, feminism, lingkungan, dan antropologi" (collaborative theatre, feminism, environment, and anthropology) (Yudiaryani 2010). The interpretation of the quoted statement by the authors underscores the mentioned elements, with collaborative theatre being highlighted as one of the expressive forms. Yudiaryani's analysis posits that contemporary Indonesian theatre is significantly influenced by three key factors: multiculturalism, postmodernism, and the aesthetic reception of the audience. In essence, the diverse nuances among local communities play a pivotal role in inspiring theatre artists. Postmodernism, particularly, enables a profound reexamination of established norms, liberating narratives from perceived classical and elitist constraints. This freedom empowers individuals to authentically articulate personal stories, fostering a rich tapestry of voices within the realm of creative discourse.

Existing research has predominantly concentrated on semiotics within theatre performance (Harahap, Sunendar, & Damaianti 2013). Taufiq Darwis's scholarly inquiry critically assesses the identity of modern Indonesian theatre through an exploration of translated works by Asrul Sani, which notably contain substantial postcolonial content (Darwis 2013). Additional scholarly endeavors have scrutinized the transformation of traditional theatre into a modern entity influenced by the West. Concurrently, another cohort of researchers have employed theatre as a tool to achieve specific aims, applying Western theatre theories to fulfill educational objectives (Wastap 2019; Wening 2021).

None of the writers researched on intermediality in theatre although the concept of intermediality is taken from Kattenbelt, a theatre studies scholar (Budiawan & Limanta 2021). This perhaps is caused by the notable absence of digital theatre in Indonesian theatre landscape. The internet is not considered a real space as highlighted by Senft that internet is an effect of particle switching activity which formed the internet itself. Meanwhile Peter Anders stated that cyberspace is a symbolic space (Dixon 2007). However, if linked to the development of digital theatre in Indonesia, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, the writers argue that Indonesian theatre troupes also use internet to create a real space that is virtual, which digital theatre makers use. The pandemic gives an opportunity for Indonesian theatre groups and companies to survive by creating digital productions. New domains delivered new forms of digital performances in the country. Indonesia Kaya adapted various Indonesian folktales, SkinnyIndonesian24 created DPR Musical, #DigitalisasiKoma, Indonesia Kaya with series of theatre program and several campus theatres that are determined to exist decided to switch form to digital theatre.

To the writers' knowledge, research on Indonesian digital theatre which attaches digital theatre to identity as a product of intermediality is yet to be found. Meanwhile, narrations presented and captured within Indonesian electronic media are expressions of efforts from artists in seeing, creating, experiencing, and understanding digital or virtual theatre in Indonesia for the sustainability of theatre itself (Febriani & Bima 2020; Kacong 2020; Tunggal 2020). Within the realm of Teater Koma initiatives, a cluster of research works has delved into diverse aspects such as artistic spatial arrangements, community relationship strategies, stage theater conventions in digital performances, audience reception, and the adaptation of stage aesthetics into videos (Chandra, Birowo, & H. 2023; Dalila & Hidajad 2022; Sathotho 2022 & 2023; Sebastian & Widodo 2023). Methods used are interdisciplinary combining theatre artistic conventions in combination with film conventions with discourse analysis and multimodality. Furthermore, it is intriguing to investigate the discourses that emerge within these efforts, specifically exploring how Indonesian digital theatre contributes to discussions surrounding identity, meaning-making, and perhaps even ideology.

The writers contend that it is imperative to conduct research on Indonesian digital theatre with the goal of exploring, revealing, and gauging the evolution of digital performances in the country, particularly within the realm of theatre. This endeavor seeks to position Indonesian digital theatre within the global landscape of digital performances, offering insights that can inform pedagogy, production processes, performances, and methodologies. Additionally, this research has the potential to generate novel theories specific to Indonesian theatre performances.

This transformation is marked by heightened and more consistent intensity, influenced by changes in the production process, interactions among production members, comprehension of audio-visual aspects in performances, and the pivotal shift of technology from a supporting role to a central element in the production process. Furthermore, these changes extend to the increasing popularity of digital media usage as an alternative space, shaping a new interactive medium that facilitates engagement between digital theatre makers and their audience. Understanding these dynamics is essential for comprehending the evolving landscape of Indonesian theatre in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has engendered a transformative opportunity for Indonesian theatre groups, prompting a shift towards the exploration of digital theatre as a new form. This paradigmatic change creates a compelling focal point for scholars in theatre studies to engage in systematic examination and analysis of Indonesian digital theatre works. Central to this paradigm shift is the redefined role and position of technology within the theatre-making process.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, theatre, traditionally characterized as a multimodal and interdisciplinary art form, had integrated technology as an indispensable component in its production dynamics. In the context of digital theatre performances, technology is no longer a mere supplemental element but a prerequisite. This transformative integration of technology gives rise to a distinct medium with its unique identity and artistic attributes.

However, upon reflecting on Dixon's examination of digital theatre, it becomes apparent that the theatre scene in Indonesia has not followed a similar trajectory. This is evident in the type of performances staged in Indonesia after the COVID-19 restrictions were lifted. Theatre performances returned to the physical stage, and while digitalization was experienced during the pandemic using platforms like YouTube or social media such as Instagram, these become primarily used to market and publicize the performances, as well as serve as publication and documentation tools. In the Indonesian context, digitalization in theatre appears to have evolved into an essential survival tool, reflecting the ongoing struggle for existence among theatre groups in Indonesia during the COVID-19 era. Further research related to this phenomenon will be interesting in connection to audience preferences, local wisdom, and culture.

Drawing parallels with established practices such as the master's program in digital theatre in the UK, it is opportune for Indonesian arts institutes to proactively prepare future graduates with the requisite skills for effective interaction and utilization of technology in their artistic pursuits. Proposing a curriculum that explicitly recognizes the acquisition of technological proficiency and digital literacy as paramount learning outcomes is not only timely but crucial for the holistic academic preparation of emerging artists in the Indonesian context.

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