

Ancient Balinese Society From The Perspective of Modern Theater Performance

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ABSTRACT

The rich world of ancient Balinese society can be reimagined through the lens of modern theatre. Balinese culture holds a deep legacy of philosophy, spirituality, and social values that have long been expressed through its traditional arts. Over time, these art forms have evolved and so has theatre itself. The challenge today is how to bring the social structures, beliefs, and daily life of historical Bali to the modern stage, blending traditional aesthetics with contemporary performance techniques. This study uses a qualitative and descriptive approach, drawing on literature, live performance observations, and interviews with practitioners of contemporary Balinese theatre. It draws inspiration from Stuart Hall's theory of representation which explores how meaning is built through language and symbols and Richard Schechner's theory of performativity, which views performance as a living, transformative act of culture. The findings show that modern Balinese theatre has become a powerful space for reinterpreting the past. Through symbolism, storytelling, and the creative dialogue between tradition and innovation, theatre can revive and renew Bali's collective cultural memory. Rather than replacing traditional values, this evolution strengthens and expands them, connecting old wisdom to new audiences. Modern theatre thus stands as a bridge between Bali's cultural history and its contemporary identity, helping safeguard its spirit in an ever-globalizing world

KEYWORDS

Ancient Bali,
modern theater,
cultural representation,
performativity,
identity



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Introduction

Ancient Balinese society was a social entity shaped by the dynamic interaction of culture, religion, customary law, and the natural environment. As an island rich in natural resources and distinct geographical features, Bali nurtured a way of life that was both simple and highly structured.

Supratikno Rahardjo [1, pp. 1-20], in *Sejarah Kebudayaan Bali*, discusses how Balinese culture evolved alongside socio-economic changes, yet retained the core framework of its traditional society. A defining feature of ancient Balinese life was the spatial organization of villages, the *banjar* system, and kinship networks, all closely bound by customary laws (*awig-awig*) that served as guiding principles for collective living.

The book *Tradisi Desa Bali Kuna* illustrates how ancient Balinese communities organized their lives through village systems, *banjar*, *sekehe* (social groups), and ancestral customs [2, pp. 45-78]. Within these traditional villages, agricultural

activity particularly the *subak* irrigation system formed the economic and social lifeblood of society, symbolizing communal cooperation and spiritual harmony with nature.

The principle of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) played a central role in maintaining this balance, expressed through religious ceremonies and the shared upkeep of public facilities such as temples and irrigation channels. Religious life itself was deeply rooted in village temples, with family units forming the foundation of ritual practices, especially during *piodalan* (temple festival) ceremonies.

The *odalan* a temple's anniversary celebration provided vital occasions for villagers to gather, strengthen social bonds, and present traditional performing arts [3, pp. 3-4]. These ceremonies were often accompanied by dance, *gamelan* music, *wayang* (shadow puppetry), and ritual dramas that embodied Balinese cosmology, ancestral myths, and sacred narratives, weaving together the spiritual and communal fabric of Balinese life.

The book *Antologi Bali Tempo Doeloe* [4, pp. 1-20] offers an important collection of historical narratives that illuminate Bali's past from multiple perspectives from the Dutch arrival to the 20th century revealing the complex layers of Balinese society. Vickers observes that interpretations of Bali's history have often been shaped by outsiders; yet, these accounts remain valuable as catalysts for internal reflection and dialogue within Bali itself.

In today's rapidly transforming socio-cultural landscape, such understanding of traditional structures is essential. It provides insight into the roots and dynamics of change, helping contemporary Balinese society remain connected to its deep cultural lineage [5].

The transformation of Bali from an agrarian society to one driven by tourism has created profound challenges surrounding cultural identity. Customary norms now find themselves in constant dialogue and sometimes tension with the forces of economic modernity and globalization. As noted by Suardhana et al [6, pp. 20-34], Balinese society continues to seek balance between embracing modernity and safeguarding its traditions.

This delicate harmony is sustained by allowing traditional arts to evolve remaining relevant through inventive performance formats, engagement with new media, and the integration of contemporary aesthetics yet always anchored in their cultural roots. The local wisdom embedded in Balinese language, customs, social ethics, and spirituality continues to shape a "living space," a cultural landscape that has long defined the collective identity of its people.

The book *Jejak Budaya Bali* [7, pp. 50-75] offers a thoughtful reflection on how Balinese traditions and language have long formed the foundation of both past and present identity. Looking back at ancient Balinese society reveals not only its social, political, and economic structures, but also its rich symbolic dimension the intricate relationship between humans, nature, ancestral spirits, and the cosmos.

These symbolic elements come alive through ritual ceremonies such as *ngaben*, *melasti*, *odalan*, and sacred dances, where metaphor and meaning are expressed through movement, colour, and sound. Ancient Balinese communities also upheld strong systems

of local leadership, traditional villages, and guiding principles such as *Tri Hita Karana* the philosophy of harmony between humanity, nature, and the divine.

The study of ancient Balinese society invites readers and audiences alike to step into the layered world of the pastits social structures, its stories, and its spiritual depth. This foundation continues to fuel creative expression today, linking myth and memory, and bridging the past and future through performance. Local kingdoms once served not only as political centres but also as cultural and spiritual heartlands. Kings such as Sri Haji Jayapangus are remembered through inscriptions and oral histories as symbols of harmony and cultural fusion, especially between Balinese society and the wider world [8].

King Jayapangus, also known by the title Paduka Sri Maharaja Haji Jayapangus Arkajacihna (or Arka-lancana), ruled ancient Bali and left behind numerous inscriptions that attest to the administrative and cultural life of his kingdom. Among the people of Pinggan (Kintamani, Bangli), his legacy is closely linked to the founding of *Pura Dalem Balingkang*, believed to have once been a royal palace later transformed into a temple. The temple is dedicated to the kingrevered as a *Siddha Dewata*and his Chinese consort, Kang Ching Wie [9].

Local historical accounts describe Kang Ching Wie as the daughter of a Chinese merchant whose name and story were woven into Balinese tradition through her marriage to Jayapangus. The name *Balingkang* itself is said to be derived from “Bali” and “Kang,” symbolising this cultural union.

Ancient Balinese society did not operate under a rigid royal hierarchy or a tightly centralised government. Instead, it held a cosmological belief that deceased ancestors and kings could be sanctified, becoming part of the spiritual realm and objects of veneration. This worldview is beautifully reflected in the story of King Jayapangus, honoured as *Ida Bhatara Dalem Balingkang*. Folklore and legends surrounding Jayapangus and Kang Ching Wieespecially those connected to the origin of the *Barong Landung*reveal the enduring power of myth and symbolism within Bali’s collective memory.

In traditional Balinese performancewhether in dance, drama, *wayang*, or temple ritualart has always served as a bridge between history and myth, bringing ancestral stories to life. The legend of Jayapangus and Kang Ching Wie holds a timeless dramatic power, often adapted for the stage through storytelling, choreography, and symbolic theatre. A striking modern example is the *Bale Agung Show*, staged regularly at Bali Safari & Marine Park, which reimagines their mythic love story with rich visual poetrycomplete with conflict, devotion, and the powerful presence of *Barong Landung*. The production beautifully illustrates how today’s Balinese artists reinterpret ancient legends through the language of modern performance.

Contemporary works like *Bali Agung* combine spectacle and substancemelding dynamic set designs, lighting, props, and even live animalsto connect the imagination of ancient Bali with the visual expectations of a modern audience. The story of Jayapangus and Kang Ching Wie is steeped in emotional depth: the sorrow of childlessness, the king’s meditation upon Mount Batur, his fateful encounter with Dewi Danu, and the queen’s

grief and longing. These timeless human themes give the story its dramatic strength and its resonance in today's theatre.

Grounded in local history, *Pura Dalem Balingkang* and its associated legends offer a rich well of inspiration for creative interpretation. They hold traces of Bali's economic life, language, art, and social order elements still visible in temple architecture, oral traditions, and archaeological remains. The story of Jayapangus and Kang Ching Wie also reflects Bali's long openness to outside influences through trade and cultural exchange, shaping an identity built on harmony and adaptation. This is the very dialogue *Teater Bali Agung* seeks to capture a living conversation between past and present.

Thus, as audiences experience *Bali Agung*, they are invited to journey into ancient Balinese society its kingdoms, customs, religion, myths, and symbols through the lens of performance. It is not only a dramatic spectacle but also a reflection of enduring values: tolerance, cultural plurality, and the spiritual essence that continues to define Balinese identity.

Method

This study applies a qualitative research approach using a case study or theatre ethnography framework. Primary data is collected through participatory observation of modern theatrical performances that explore themes of ancient Balinese society. In-depth interviews are conducted with directors, performers, audience members and Balinese cultural experts, supported by documentation such as video and photographic records, scripts, props, costumes and stage designs.

Secondary data includes literature on Balinese history, archival records, ancient manuscripts, and critical writings on theatre. The data is then analysed using a descriptive-analytical method, classifying both aesthetic and socio-cultural elements, and comparing how representations of "*ancient Bali*" appear in traditional versus contemporary performance.

The study's theoretical foundation draws on Theatre Semiotics, particularly the study of performance texts and contexts. Marco de Marinis's *The Semiotics of Performance* is especially relevant here, as it examines how a performance communicates cultural signs and meanings through visual and symbolic elements costume, props, set design, movement, and spatial arrangements as well as dialogue and atmosphere. These elements interact with the cultural memory of ancient Bali to construct new meanings within modern theatrical expression.

This framework is further supported by theories from the sociology of theatre and performance studies, as developed by scholars such as Richard Schechner. His ideas help position performance not merely as entertainment, but as a social ritual, a process of cultural transformation, and a meeting point between the stage and society [10].

Results and Discussion

Performing arts have always played a vital role in the life of Nusantara society. For Balinese Hindus, artistic expression is a reflection of the self a form of devotion that unites beauty, spirituality, and deep respect for cultural and traditional values. The community's participation is central to the growth and survival of these arts. Performing arts are inherently collective: they exist through collaboration between performers and audience, between ritual and celebration.

Performance itself is an experience that lives only in the moment. It unfolds in space and time, then disappears leaving behind memory rather than material. In Bali, the performing arts encompass dance, *karawitan* (traditional music), and *pedalangan* (theatre or puppetry). Within Balinese Hindu society, dance generally serves three key functions: as ritual ceremony, as customary or *adat* practice, and as entertainment. Based on these functions, Balinese dance is classified into three categories: *tari wali*, *tari bebal*, *tari bali*-*bali* [11], such as the *Bale Agung* theatre works.

Modern theatre, while allowing greater artistic freedom, remains conceptually grounded in these traditional foundations. It represents a contemporary form of self-expression one that continues to evolve alongside Bali's cultural tourism. Beyond its stunning natural beauty, Bali's greatest strength lies in the richness of its traditions and the devotion of its people. Among the many expressions of that culture, performing arts stand as one of the island's most captivating and enduring attractions [12].

The growing number of tourists visiting Bali has encouraged the local community to become more creative in producing things that have "exchange value." Giddens [13] describes "exchange value" as closely linked to "commodity." Commodities carry two kinds of value: "use value" and "exchange value."

In the context of tourism, Balinese society tends to emphasize the economic aspect. This is evident in the many locals who, since the rise of tourism, have taken up professions connected to the industry becoming tour guides, opening travel agencies, renting cars, running guesthouses and hotels, selling food, souvenirs, and other tourism-related goods and services.

A positive outcome of this development is the emergence of artistic and cultural creativity within Balinese community life. In response to tourism, new forms of expression have flourished. Beyond painting and crafts, the island's rich tradition of performing arts has grown and evolved. Among these, a striking example is the transformation of the sacred Sanghyang dance (*tari wali*) into a more secular form *Teater Bali Agung*. This innovative adaptation of traditional Balinese performance was created by I Made Sidia, director of *Sanggar Seni Paripurna* in Gianyar.

Sanggar Paripurna is an art studio founded on 1 April 1990 by the multi-talented artist from Desa Bona, Blahbatuh, Gianyar I Made Sidja. The studio is dedicated to the preservation, development, and creation of Balinese art and culture, with a strong focus on nurturing the artistic talents of younger generations. Its main activities include: 1) Traditional Balinese dance both classical and newly created works, 2)

Karawitan (traditional Balinese music and gamelan), 3) *Wayang* performances, including puppet-making and manipulation, 4) Traditional Balinese theatre.

Sanggar Paripurna is active in presenting performances locally and internationally, as well as offering training for children and youth who wish to deepen their skills in Balinese arts and culture.

One of the major theatre works developed at Sanggar Paripurna is Teater Bale Agung, a spectacular production created by I Made Sidia. This large-scale performance combines drama, dance, gamelan music, and modern stage effects. Sidia successfully brought *Bale Agung: The Legend of Balinese Goddesses* to life with the support of many collaborators. The creative process involved international artists and a production team from Bali Safari & Marine Park, where the show continues to be performed.

Key contributors to the production include:

1. Peter Wilson, Australian director known for his work in wayang and visual theatre
2. The technical and production teams from Taman Safari Indonesia, supporting staging, special effects, and technical design
3. Balinese dancers, musicians, and *dalang* who helped merge traditional arts with modern technology in performance

Created in 2010, Teater Bali Agung has become a major cultural attraction at Gianyar Safari Park. The work successfully blends elements of traditional Balinese art with contemporary theatrical techniques. Through dance, gamelan, wayang, and grand visual imagery, *Bale Agung* tells the legends and history of Bali in a way that is both spectacular and deeply rooted in tradition. It continues to receive strong appreciation from both local and international audiences, enriching the cultural experience of Bali's tourism landscape.

Bale Agung Modern Theatre

Theatre is a branch of the performing arts that combines drama, acting, music, dance, and visual elements to convey a story or idea to an audience. According to Brockett & Hildy [14] in *History of the Theatre*, theatre has developed since ancient times as a medium of cultural and social expression. In Indonesia, theatre exists in many forms, including traditional theatre closely tied to customs, mythology, and religious ceremonies.

One traditional theatrical form developed in Bali is Balinese traditional theatre. This type of theatre has distinctive characteristics that set it apart. Foley [15], in *Bali and Beyond: Explorations in the Anthropology of Performance*, explains that Balinese traditional theatre is considered sacred and is often associated with Hindu religious ceremonies. Some of its main elements include dance, gamelan accompaniment, and the use of masks and traditional costumes, which are rich in symbolism.

Teater Bale Agung is a form of Balinese theatre that blends traditional concepts with contemporary elements. It has its own unique identity, adapting traditional Balinese theatrical concepts with modern touches.

This large-scale production is performed at the Bali Safari & Marine Park and features: 1) Hundreds of performers, 2) Grand visual effects, 3) Storylines derived from Balinese mythology, 4) The legend of King Sri Jaya Pangus and Goddess Kang Cing Wie, reflecting a mix of Balinese and Chinese cultural influences. According to Smith [16] in *Issues in Cultural Tourism Studies*, Bale Agung is an example of how traditional performing arts can be packaged as tourist attractions without losing their cultural value. By combining modern technology with traditional aesthetics, Bale Agung has become a type of theatre that not only entertains but also introduces the richness of Balinese culture to both domestic and international tourists.

Teater Bale Agung stands as a true example of innovative Balinese traditional performing arts. The creation of any artwork begins with the spark of an idea or concept, then moves through a series of stages before it finally comes to life. This process is an inseparable whole each stage feeding and shaping the next.

An artistic idea may arise from many influences, both internal and external. Internal factors include personal experience, emotion, and the artist's intuition; while external ones come from culture, community, and the surrounding environment all of which help shape creative inspiration [17].

The development of a performance work typically moves through several key stages: 1) Primary capital, 2) Creative capital, 3) Understanding local culture, 4) Concept formation, 5) Prayer or spiritual grounding, 6) The creative process itself leading to the realization and presentation of the final work.

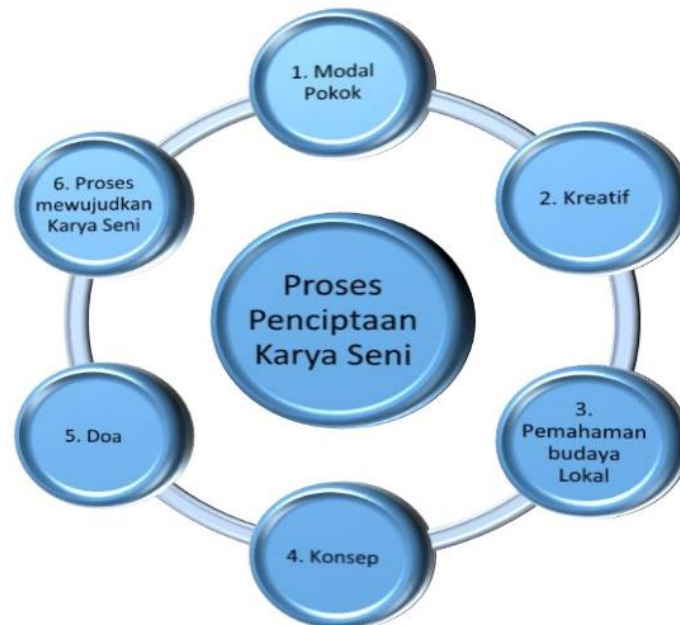


Figure 1. The Process of Creating a Work of Art
(Source: Adapted from Rai, 2020)

The creation of a work of art usually passes through a series of creative stages. The creative process is the journey an artist takes to develop an idea and transform it into

a finished work. It is not driven by talent alone it also demands a deep understanding of culture, imagination, clear conceptual thinking, and perseverance to bring the work to life.

According to Rai [18], to create a high-quality performance, an artist must possess several essential foundations: creativity, an understanding of local culture, a strong concept, spiritual grounding through prayer, and ongoing effort throughout the process.

First, in creating *Bale Agung Theater*, an artist must have the basic capital of talent and skill, supported by a strong cultural understanding. Technical ability is fundamental without it, a work can lose both its quality and aesthetic integrity.

Second, creativity is vital. A creative artist constantly seeks new ideas rather than repeating the works of others. It is through creativity that originality emerges allowing an artist to create works that speak to their own time and place.

Third, beyond creative ideas, an artist must have a deep understanding of local culture. Local wisdom often serves as the root of inspiration for performance. Without this understanding, there is a real risk of misinterpreting or misusing cultural elements within the work. The environment plays a crucial role in the process of art creation. Works of art do not emerge without reason; rather, they are the result of an artist's experience, expression, and interaction with their surroundings.

Fourth, creative ideas must be grounded in a clear concept. A well-developed concept allows the artist to shape and structure the work systematically. Without it, the creative process can easily lose direction or stall.

Fifth, in bringing a concept to life, the artist also needs spiritual strength. Prayer and connection with the divine are believed to provide inner calm, clarity, and inspiration throughout the process of creation. Finally, with creativity, cultural understanding, a strong concept, and spiritual grounding, the artist reaches the stage of realization. Here, ideas move from imagination into tangible form works of art that can be shared and experienced by an audience.

Idea Exploration and Conceptualization of Bale Agung Theater

Bale Agung Theater is one of Bali's traditional performing arts, developed as a large-scale tourist attraction. Its creation process involves several main stages:

- Idea exploration and conceptualization
- Script writing
- Artistic design: This includes choreography, costumes, and makeup.
- Selection of accompanying music/gamelan: This serves as the sound design.
- Rehearsals and refinement
- The final stage: The execution of the performance in front of an audience, with careful attention to all technical and artistic aspects.

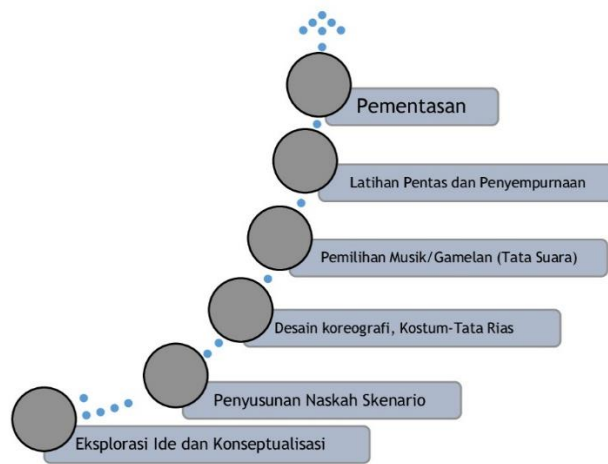


Figure 2. The Creation Process of Bale Agung Theater

In the creation process of the Bale Agung Theater, the stages of idea exploration and conceptualization play a crucial role. This stage involves a series of systematic steps to ensure the resulting performance possesses strong artistic, cultural, and tourism appeal.

a) Identifying Ideas and Themes for the Performance

The first step in idea exploration is to determine the main idea and theme to be presented. This includes identifying the objectives, benefits, and significance of the work to be created. The theme selection considers local cultural elements, historical relevance, and appeal to tourists. In the context of Bale Agung Theater, the chosen theme is a story rooted in Balinese culture, integrated with large-scale theatrical elements to produce a grand and captivating performance.

b) Study of Culture, History, and Local Values

To ensure the performance reflects a strong identity, an in-depth study of culture, history, and local values is conducted. This study aims to ensure the performance serves as an educational medium that introduces Balinese culture to the audience, moving beyond just entertainment. The study explores mythology, customs, traditional dance, and Balinese music, which are later adapted into the performance.

As part of this exploration and conceptualization, I Made Sidia and the Safari management team conducted a study tour to Thailand to observe tourist attractions there. Thai theatre often features spectacular elements, including interactions with animals such as elephants. This visit provided valuable insights into designing large-scale theatrical performances. The experience from Thailand became an inspiration for developing the Bale Agung Theater, especially in crafting a concept that harmoniously blends cultural elements, nature, and stage technology.

c) International Collaboration in Developing Bale Agung Theater

The creation of Bale Agung Theater was not solely the result of an individual's creative vision; it was also a product of cross-cultural collaboration. During its development, I Made Sidia worked with two Australian artists: Peter Wilson and Chong Lim.

Peter Wilson and Chong Lim: A World-Class Collaboration. Peter Wilson, a director known for his work in puppetry and visual theatre, contributed to the development of visual elements and storytelling for the production.

Chong Lim, a seasoned composer who arranged music for the 2006 Winter Olympics closing ceremony in Turin, Doha Asia Games 2006, Sydney 2000 Olympics Opening ceremony, was responsible for creating musical compositions that brought the performance to life and enhanced the narrative.

This collaboration integrated modern technology with traditional theatre, resulting in a spectacular and world-class production. As a result, Bale Agung Theatre has become a top tourist attraction that showcases the richness of Balinese culture through an innovative theatrical approach. The performance is staged at Taman Safari Gianyar, attracting both domestic and international audiences.

The idea exploration and conceptualization process for Bale Agung Theatre was in-depth and systematic. From theme selection and historical studies to cross-cultural collaboration, every step aimed to introduce Bali's cultural wealth to the world. Through innovation in stage use, lighting design, integration with nature, and international collaboration, Bale Agung Theatre has become a performing arts icon that harmoniously blends tradition with modernity in a stunning way.

d) Scriptwriting (Scenario) for Bale Agung Theater

In theater and drama, the script is the foundational element that determines a performance's storyline, characterization, and structure. It serves as a guide for actors in portraying their roles and as a reference for the director, production team, and all other contributors to the show. A well-crafted script provides direction, creates emotional depth, and builds harmony among all performance elements, enabling the message to be effectively received by the audience. In the scriptwriting process for Bale Agung Theater, several key aspects are given special attention:

Determining the Choreography Model

Choreography is a primary element in Bale Agung Theater, serving as a medium for visual expression that brings the story to life. The choreography is designed based on the main theme and the emotions intended to be conveyed to the audience. Through structured choreography, the performance becomes aesthetically pleasing and capable of delivering strong emotional meaning.

Designing Aesthetic Standards

To achieve a unified aesthetic experience in Bale Agung Theater, the script includes the design of aesthetic norms to be applied in every aspect of the performance.

Integrating these elements ensures a cohesive artistic experience that creates a lasting emotional impact on the audience.

Intensive Discussions with Artists and Cultural Experts

To ensure the script reflects authentic cultural values, intensive discussions are held with artists and cultural figures. These discussions facilitate collaboration between local and international artists, resulting in a performance rich in tradition with global appeal.

Developing a Production Plan

To ensure that the artistic concept is fully realized, the script includes a detailed production plan. This covers the structured technical and logistical aspects of the show, ensuring each stage of production runs efficiently and meets high artistic standards.



Figure 3. Barong Landung Transformation King Jayapangus and Kang Ching Wie.

Conclusion

Script development for the Bale Agung Theater involves a comprehensive planning of all performance elements, from choreography and aesthetic standards to collaboration and production planning. These stages contribute to a high-quality performance with international appeal. Through a mature and integrative approach, Bale Agung Theater stands as an iconic work that merges tradition and innovation in breathtaking harmony.

Artistic Design of Bale Agung Theater. Following the stages of exploration and conceptualization, the creation of the Bale Agung Theater production proceeds to the artistic design phase. This phase is crucial and includes determining the choreography, costumes, and makeup. These three elements are vital for building character, setting the atmosphere, and enhancing the overall aesthetic of the performance.

Choreography (the dynamics of movement in storytelling), Choreography in Bale Agung Theater consists of dance movements used as a visual communication tool to strengthen the narrative. According to Bandem & deBoer [19], Balinese dance typically features strong symbolism, graceful hand movements, and dramatic facial expressions. These elements are applied to preserve the authenticity of Balinese culture within a modern performance context.

Costumes (character identity through attire), Costumes in Bale Agung Theater serve not only as visual complements but also as markers of character identity and story background. The costume designs draw inspiration from 12th-century Balinese and Chinese culture, reflecting the story's historical setting. As Covarrubias [20] noted in *Island of Bali*, Balinese traditional costumes carry deep philosophical and spiritual meanings, values which are preserved in this production.

Makeup (defining expressions and characters), The main purpose of makeup in Bale Agung Theater is to emphasize expressions and clarify characters and emotions, moving beyond simply enhancing the actors' appearance. According to Soedarsono [21], makeup in performance art functions as a form of visual semiotics, where each line and color holds a meaning that supports the narrative and characterization.

By combining dynamic choreography, majestic costumes, and expressive makeup, Bale Agung Theater offers a spectacular visual experience. This approach preserves the unique cultural identity of Bali in modern performance art. Every artistic element is carefully crafted to deliver emotional depth, reinforce storytelling, and present a world-class cultural attraction.

Selection of Gamelan (Music) and Sound Design in Bale Agung Theater, Music plays a vital role in setting the atmosphere of a performance. In Balinese performing arts, gamelan is a core element that enhances the expression of dance and drama. The music in Bale Agung Theater is complex, blending traditional Balinese gamelan with modern orchestration to create a unique and spectacular musical composition.

Combining Traditional and Modern Music, Unlike Thai theater, which typically uses minimal musical accompaniment, Bale Agung Theater employs a more dynamic and complex musical approach. This fusion of traditional and modern music strengthens the dramatic ambiance and creates an immersive audio effect suited to the show's large scale.

Types of Gamelan Used, Several types of Balinese gamelan are selectively used in Bale Agung Theater, with recordings processed by Chong Lim to support the emotional flow and narrative. These include: Gamelan Gong Kebyar, Gamelan Semar Pegulingan, Gamelan Angklung, and Gamelan Baleganjur.

Sound Design and Audio Effects, In addition to traditional gamelan, modern sound technology is employed to enhance the audio quality. Techniques used include: Advanced sound systems; Natural sound effects; Precise blending of gamelan and orchestral music; A surround sound setup to give the audience the sensation of being immersed in the story's environment.

The Impact of Music on the Performance Atmosphere; The fusion of traditional Balinese music and modern orchestration creates a wide range of emotional atmospheres. In Bale Agung Theater, music is not just a background element; it is an integral part of the storytelling. The result is a rich, deep, and emotionally resonant composition that elevates the performance to an international standard.

Rehearsals and Refinement in Bale Agung Theater; Rehearsals are a crucial stage in the creation of Bale Agung Theater, ensuring the performance achieves optimal artistic quality. They are conducted repeatedly to refine every aspect: visuals, audio, emotional expression, and narrative flow.

Scale of Production and Cast; Bale Agung Theater is a large-scale production involving over 150 to 180 performers, including traditional dancers, musicians, shadow puppeteers, and a technical crew. Uniquely, it also features exotic animals, which enhances its visual appeal and creates a vibrant stage experience. With an auditorium capacity of up to 1,200 seats, this production requires complex coordination across artistic and technical elements to deliver a high-quality, impressive performance.

Performance Refinement Process, during the refinement stage, rehearsals focus on four key aspects: **Visual elements, Audio quality, Emotional expression, Narrative cohesion**. The rehearsal process takes place in two main phases: **Initial rehearsals** at the studio, **Intensive rehearsals** at the performance venue

This approach ensures that the storyline is clearly communicated through dialogue, body movement, and seamless scene transitions. Simulated performances are also held to test the synchronization between music, dance, dialogue, and lighting.

Ancient Balinese society was built upon a rich and well-organised social and cultural structure, shaped by the natural environment, Hindu philosophy, and deeply rooted local customs. As a spiritual expression, performing arts including dance, music, and wayang (shadow puppetry) embodied cosmological values and brought mythological stories to life. One such story, the legend of King Jayapangus and Kang Cing Wie, reflects the blending of Balinese and foreign influences, symbolising the cultural openness that continues to define Bali.

In modern times, the growth of tourism and globalization has transformed Balinese performance traditions from sacred ritual to secular theatre, while still holding fast to cultural roots. This evolution can be seen in works such as Bale Agung Theater a spectacular fusion of traditional Balinese artistry with modern stagecraft. Conceived by I Made Sidia through a creative and collaborative process, the production reimagines the myth of Jayapangus and Kang Cing Wie through dance, gamelan, wayang, and powerful visual effects. It stands as both a celebration of Balinese culture and a living vessel of its preservation.

The creation of *Bali Agung* brought together scriptwriting, choreography, music, design, and staging a process grounded in local cultural knowledge, spiritual values, and cross-cultural collaboration. Through the lens of theatre semiotics and performance studies, *Bale Agung* serves as a bridge between tradition and innovation a vibrant medium of

cultural communication that educates, entertains, and keeps the spirit of Balinese heritage alive amid the tides of modernity.

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