

# The Existence of Virtual Theater Performances of Pandemic Era

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## ABSTRACT

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, various sectors have experienced changes, especially in the arts. Performing arts are commonly witnessed directly in the stage, however, nowadays, the performance obtain be watched through virtual, focusing the theatrical performing arts. The theater virtual stage is about done to maintain the existence of the performing arts. Thereafter, this study aims to observe the existence of virtual performances that are currently developing in society, and also using qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach. Data collection was carried out by studying literature through virtual performances organized by Kala Teater in Makassar city. In addition, sample selection indicator shows that the You Tube channel of Kala Teater aired through during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, the virtual performance shows that this phenomenon is a manifestation of theater actors to prove their existence as a cultured society in the form of theatrical performances. Virtual theater space is a part form of solidarity each others as an artist, this is related to the actors, directors, choreographers and the entire theater team to get sustainability arts circumstances, and earn income in the midst of a pandemic. Presence between the government, practitioners, and the theater community is a supporting factor for the sustainability of virtual art activities. Meanwhile, such an important thing is maintaining the cooperation each of various parties to keep existence of theater performances during pandemic, which means a mutually beneficial symbiosis between all stakeholders. In sum, virtual theater performances can be enjoyed as solution during the covid-19 using the cutting-edge technology on social media. It will be a new habit in the theater world, eventually, persist instead as a part of art expression.

**Keywords:** *Existence, Virtual Performance, Pandemic.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 2020, the Covid-19 Virus shocked the world due to this deadly virus quickly spread to other countries, without the exception of Indonesia. Initially, human movement was free access, but since the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus into Indonesia, everything has become limited, included has changed several sectors of the field, it is clearly consequences social activities of the community.

All face-to-face or offline activities were restricted and even temporarily stopped and shifted to online. New rule imposed by the government namely "di rumah saja" an appeal for people to stay at home, all work to be done at home, but of course this greatly affects to the society economy, because numerous professions that must be done by leaving the house. Besides that, pandemic effect has enveloped the academic world, the schools

are closed and all of pupils learning by virtual way, or commonly known as online class.

Alternation that occur are not only in the economic sector, but also in the performing arts, particularly. Performing arts that are usually witnessed directly now have to be watched via virtual, such as theater performances, poetry readings, dance arts, music, etc, that gave various responses by the audiences because this things felt unusual. However, in this case, particularly theater performers are still trying to exist in the midst of this pandemic, because it is totally impact on the economy of artists and all things related to theatrical arts. This situation encourages the artists to keep producing, productive, and continue their artworks by promoting virtual performances.

During the pandemic, virtual theater performances have become a new habit. That case along with the rise of virtual theater performances which began to be held

through kind various parties. In this modern era, digital is of obviously obliging for the existence of the event through social media information. Communities of art actors, practitioners and the government began to organize and disseminate information through YouTube channels, via Zoom, Instagram (IG), and Facebook (FB).

Online activities are now a "safe" place to carry out performance activities. This scene was done by the Kala Teater community in response to the pandemic as a new environment. Kala Theater is one of the performing arts communities in Makassar city that concentrates on theater disciplines. Several local and national achievements have been achieved by Kala Teater, it is a testament to its existence in the world of performing arts without a doubt. He has passed through various types of stage and context of performances. Therefore, this is the reason for choosing the Kala Teater community as the object of this research.

Virtual theater performances have become a new space in the midst of society. The show is a place for synergy between the community, practitioners and the government. It is also a place for people to entertain themselves by continuing to watch via virtual even though they are at home. Based on this background, the formulation of the problem is, How is the existence of virtual theater performances in the pandemic era?

## 2. METHOD

This study apply a qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach. Data retrieval is done by studying literature through theatrical performances that are witnessed via virtual. Samples were taken from performances performed by Kala Teater during the pandemic.

Primary data was collected through data from social

### 3.1 Virtual Theater Performances

Tabel 1. Event Pertunjukan Teater

No.	Theater Performance Title	Organizer	Time Schedule	Link Virtual
1	Diri Dalam Pandemi,	Kala Teater	2 September 2020	Youtube kala teater
2.	Pembacaan Naskah Lakon Virtual Mega-mega	Kala Teater	5 November 2020	Youtube institute ungu media
3	Waktu Tanpa Buku,	Kala Teater	1-2 Desember 2020	Youtube Goethe-institut indonesian
4	Awal dan Mira	Kala Teater	10 Desember 2020	youtube kala teater
5	Di Balik Sinar Suram	Kala Teater	22-31 Mei 2021	youtube kala teater
6	Pagi 21 Menit	Kala Teater	10-19 September 2021	youtube kala teater

#### 3.1.1 Diri dalam Pandemi

This artwork called "appasili" reflects the human self who has experienced a pandemic disaster and is trapped in it. They tried to live in disaster while doing

media and other online media, while secondary data was obtained from literature studies from previous research. This research is limited to four samples of Kala Teater performance from events held nationally.

Based on qualitative research, the random sampling technique is a model technique where all populations either individually or jointly are given the same opportunity to be selected as sample members (Sugiyono. 2003). No limit to the number of samples taken at random, as long as the desired information can be obtained and generated. To conduct case study research, Creswell (2013) stated that the importance of data analysis and interpretation is an important part of qualitative research.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As we mentioned before, various efforts were made of artists to struggled and survive facing this era, especially for theatrical performing arts. The artists are trying to prevent theater performances from dying in the midst of a pandemic by creating virtual performances. So that information about the virtual performances held reaches the public, namely by utilizing technology, especially social media. The government has also opened a competition program and for those who want to cooperate by applying social media as a disseminator of information. Evidently, this is an effort to continue to do artworks. People can still enjoy virtual performances even though they no longer watch them live on stage directly. Virtual stage is a new enthusiasm and solution for performing arts performers and theater performance connoisseurs.

The virtual theater performance data in this study is a collection of virtual performances organized by Kala Teater. Some of these virtual shows are listed in Table 1 below.

self-cleaning and reinterpreting its behavior on the universe.

*Appasili* is one of oral tradition in South Sulawesi, well-known as self-purification rituals both physically

and mentally, then, this tradition as inspired this artwork. The link between one's position towards the pandemic and one's position towards the universe is reinterpreted as an effort to accept and survive in a pandemic. It is a sensible prayer for the universe, free from disaster. Shinta Febriany is the bearer of the concept and at the same time the director. Performance by Syahrini Fathi, Nurul Inayah, Dwi Lestari Johan, Arwan Irawan, Sukarno Hatta and Mega Herdiyanti. Artistic by Rio and Meditative Films videos produced by Kala Teater in collaboration with BPNB Sul-Sel 2020.

### *3.1.2 Pembacaan Naskah Lakon Virtual Mega-mega*

Mega-mega is one of Arifin C. Noer's best scripts. The script tells the story of little people living on the street whose fate changed overnight because they won the lottery. After tasting the pleasures of living with a lot of money, unfortunately, they should go back to how they used to be, because everything is just mega.

This performance is directed by Nurul Inayah. Performance by Dwi Lestari Johan, Sukarno Hatta, Mega Herdiyanti and Nirwana Aprianty. Supervisor by Shinta Febriany and Syahrini Fathi, video by Meditatif Films.

### *3.1.3 Teater Waktu Tanpa Buku*

The virtual theater performance, producer by Faiza Mardzoeki titled "Waktu Tanpa Buku" was directed by five female directors, namely Ramdiana from Aceh, Heliana Sinaga from Bandung, Ruth Marini from Jakarta, Shinta Febriany from Makassar and Agnes Christina from Yogyakarta. In addition, theater artist Wawan Sofwan was involved as a performance consultant. This show is a collaboration between the Ungu Institute and Bandung's main theater, Ruang Kala Jakarta, Sweep Lidi Aceh Teater, Makassar Kala Teater, Agnes Christina Yogyakarta.

The theater performance departed from a drama script by Lene Therese Teigen, entitled "Waktu Tanpa Buku" and was translated into Indonesian by Faiza Mardzoeki. This event tells the story of the memory of the victims of the past dictatorship in Uruguay. 'Waktu Tanpa Buku' uncovers individual personal memories that leave from the great experience of vortex political turmoil in their nation. This story is also close to Indonesia.

This performance is done with theatrical and film aspects approach. The female directors' reading of the "Waktu Tanpa Buku" script from the beginning was with the realization that the show would be held virtually. So that the directors are not fixated on the rules of staging alone.

The female director is also be supposed to think about shooting the scene cinematically. Each director explores it through discussion, looking for references, and been involved from the beginning the camera's point of view. Although there are also directors who maintain the rules of theatrical stage, they still take into account the angle and camera position along the process. Thus, the female directors also have full awareness to present a camera not only limited to documentation.

This film theater performance is part of series of activities "Art and Human Rights Dialogue" in order to celebrate the 16-day campaign against violence women and Human Rights Day, which will start from November 25 to December 10, 2020.

### *3.1.4 Awal dan Mira*

Manuscripts "Awal dan Mira", by Utuy Tatang Sontani, have been considered as one of the classic Indonesian texts. First published in 1951, this manuscript describes a society that is undergoing a change in values after the war of independence. The reading of the scripts for Awal and Mira was carried out by Kala Teater.

A series of performances "Awal and Mira" in order to take part in the 'Festival Baca Naskah Lakon' organized by the Indonesia Dramatic Reading Festival (IDRF) Language Politics and the Goethe-Institut Indonesien, supported by Citraweb Solusi Teknologi, Citranet, Citraweb Cultural Center, Sakatoya Community, Teater Garasi /Garage Performance Institute, Gardanalla Theatre, Kalabuku, Kahe Community, Kala Theatre, Kaleng Merah Jambu Collective. The event start from December 8 to 10, 2020.

### *3.1.5 Di Balik Sinar Suram*

Kala Teater continue to be productive during the pandemic. The group which was founded in 2006 is preparing a new show that will be presented virtually in 2021. New production entitled "Di Balik Sinar Suram", by Marx Carvehl which was freely adapted by Fred H. Wetik and acceacable via YouTube on May 22-31, 2021. Since this pandemic period, Kala Teater has worked around this by moving the medium of the show from the actual stage to the virtual stage," said Shinta Febriany Director and director of Kala Teater in a press release received, Friday, May 21, 2021. This virtual theater show aims, as follows:

#### *3.1.5.1. The show raises a discourse about contemporary art*

The script "Di Balik Sinar Suram" considered by Kala Teater as capable to present a discourse about contemporary art. That is the question of whether art still has a cultural value or is now just a commodity.

Director of "Di Balik Sinar Suram" Dwi Sastro Mario said this script depicts the debate about quality films and films that are only concerned with economic benefits.

### 3.1.5.2. The results of the training of actors.

Latest production of Kala Teater continues the program that has been empowered since 2010, namely Actor Studio. This space addressed for all of actors, included for newbie and whoever want to increase their acting capacity. All participants from the Program Studio Aktor presented their knowledge, materials, and practices in the form of a theatrical performance production.

Since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020 until new production in 2021, Kala Teater has performed several virtual shows, namely "Awal and Mira", "Diri dalam Pandemi", and "Waktu Tanpa Buku", all of these directed by Shinta Febriany.

The actors and production team involved are Nirwana Aprianty, Sukarno Hatta, Mega Herdiyanti, Yasser Adam, Sabri Sahafuddin, Fikri Yathir, and Jerome Benael Matulesy, thus, while Dwi Lestari Johan as Stage Manager, Wawan Aprilianto as Artistic Stylist, Nirwana Aprianty as Makeup Artist and Costumes, and Nurul Inayah as Production Leader.

### *3.1.6 Pagi 21 Menit*

In the beginning this drama opens with a song that is very graceful and calms the mind, then enters the story stage, there are three characters in the same background in a house yard carrying out their respective activities. Each of them have different character, firstly, is Nisu who is busy watering the plants, secondly, Zore who cuts the grass, and thirdly, comes the character of Poha who starts the conversation.

Poha's character asked "What is hope?" and "What is the future?" being the core problem of this story. A 21-minute story that discusses hope and the future immerses the viewer's thoughts and makes self-awareness about hope and the future that is still being thought about.

Furthermore, this drama tells of realistic events so that it can captivate the hearts of the audience. As we know during this pandemic era, everyone certainly wonders about the hopes and future that will happen to us. The declining economy makes everyone lose hope and the future.

The set up of place doesn't move and it taken in the morning for about 21 minutes, so that is way this drama called as "Pagi 21 Menit". On the contrary, the choice of setting in only one place and one angle makes the audience feel bored, especially the voice of the characters are not loud when speaking makes this drama difficult to understand. Fortunately, the song that is inserted at the beginning of the drama becomes a good

point because it has beautiful instruments and lyrics and has an implied value in it.

### **3.2. Collaboration with other communities, practitioners and the government, also theater performers during the Covid-19 pandemic**

Since the Covid-19 virus has hit various countries around the world, governments and artists have been faced with the problem of how to keep theatrical performances afloat in the midst of a pandemic. All parties as soon as possible to respond this problem, included respond to the problems of social change that occur, and immediate find a solution to this problem due to a significant change in activity. In particular, all artistic activities are no longer carried out directly, there are no direct meetings. Therefore, all performances are carried out virtually so that artistic activities in the midst of the pandemic can still survive or exist, so, solution of this case is to cooperate between performers of the arts with the government and other practitioners.

### **3.3 Social Media**

In today's era, along with the development of technology, social media become a supporter of several sectors and all of aspects life need, insteadly. In line with this, according to Nasrullah (2015), the development of technology and social media provides an opportunity to be used as a publication media for art works. Social media allows users to interact and represent themselves as well as work together, share, communicate with other users by forming virtual social bonds.

Kala Teater community utilizes social media as a medium of information to the public, such as Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Youtube, and Zoom. That means, all of social media supports the existence of virtual theater performances.

### **3.4 The Existence of Virtual Theater Performances**

Along with the social growth of society, performing arts also develop. Humans not only need to eat and drink for nutritional intake, but also live with art as a need for body and soul. Therefore, the form of art is a representation of the human mindset. In addition, a phenomenon called "drama", "theater", or "performance" is an individual or collective mimetic activity of the human condition and its environment (Schechner. 2015: 66)

Talk about performances, Sulkarnaen (2010:14) said that the performing arts are collective activities that aim to give the impression of beauty; get entertained and specially framed to be shown to the audience. Beside

that, Pudentia (2004:40–41) also explains that a performance is basically one-time (einmalig). A performance is an event that only occurs when it is performed. However, in online theater performances, the show is fixed and then the show files are archived on online media platforms, such as Youtube, Instagram, and others. An example is the Karaeng Naba (Java-Sulawesi Assimilation) virtual show on November 11, 2020.

According to above topics, the virtual theater performance Karaeng Naba is a performing art that takes place in parallel in two places, namely in Makassar and Yogyakarta. In our opinion, the aesthetic experience of live performances seems lost when they are shown via online. However, on the other hand, this show offers advantages on the artistic side that can be reached by the medium of technology. Digital technology is not only positioned as a tool, but also as a medium that really determines the aesthetic dimension of this show. In the end, this show tries to offer a new space or stage for performing arts through the medium of digital technology (film), which takes place in real time or can be accessed directly via Live Streaming.

Additionally, related to Sulkarnaen (2010:14) performing arts are collective activities that aim to give the impression of beauty; entertained and specially framed for display to the audience. That statement in line with the theater which has a storyline that tells the story of human conflict in the form of dialogue that is described on the stage using conversation and acting in front of the audience.

Meanwhile the pandemic, people are faced with various problems because of the changes that occur. Humans question their existence during a pandemic. Again, government creates imposed limited space for movement stay at home. This regulation being formative in social life and it is very important for sustainable humans being. On the other hand, individuals and communities, they try to exist even though they are not face-to-face or physically. Existence means that the activity is still there and is still being carried out so that the activity continues.

Existence implies an activity that continues to be carried out, so that activities continue to run smoothly. (Purwodarminto in Heni and Wahyu Lestari, 2012). Theater stage from 2020 to 2021 presented of theatrical performances which demonstrated by the virtual theater performances. This model is manifestations of art performers to show their existence as a cultured society with another perspective and as solution artwork this day.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Along the pandemic, began in 2020 till now made many changes in the habits of Indonesians and greatly influenced various sectors, especially the performing arts. The artists of performing arts are trying to find initiatives sustainably to continue their existence in this pandemic era. One of the efforts, namely by continuing to do virtual shows. Virtual theater show events are held during the pandemic, which carried out by the community itself or in collaboration with the government and other communities.

Kala Teater community comes with a virtual performance concept that synergizes with the community, including the government and other communities. Based on the data, there are six event that have been organized by Kala Teater during pandemic era. Thus, the government will give other communities to obtain space and support theater performances so that circumstances still continuing their existence and keep sustainable.

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