

From Traditional Market to Theater Stage

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Abstract: Theatrical events on stage are inherent in human life. It is closely related to such complex human problems. So, it is not uncommon for some people to say that theatrical events are social realities that are brought to the stage, which is then called "stage reality". This paper tries to expose social reality as the basis for the implementation of theatrical performances. Social events that take place in the community, especially in traditional markets, which by nature are performing arts, can also be considered theatrical performances, just like drug sellers. Events and social phenomena of drug sellers are often found in traditional markets in Nusantara because drug sellers have their charm. Therefore, every time drug sellers are present in the market, it is always seen as crowded by the people. Some drug sellers use special tents, and some others don't. In practice, almost all drug sellers use loudspeakers and some objects that can help buyers find out about the drugs being sold. The drugs sold are usually drugs that are processed traditionally, for diseases such as scabies, tinea versicolor, sprains, and others. Certainly at a price that is slightly cheaper than the drugs in pharmacies. This form of drug sales conducts various kinds of demonstrations and attractions, which are the main keys to attracting the audience's interest. As long as drug sellers sell during the buying and selling process in the market, there are so many stories that come and go through the ears of sellers and buyers. Not infrequently, they stop by, not just to buy, but also to talk about problems that occur in their households or factual problems that occur in the community. Based on this phenomenon, market events – especially the drug sellers – became the idea for a theatrical work entitled "Complication" which was written and directed by Kurniasih Zaitun by constructing and organizing drug seller events based on the necessary dramatic elements.

Keywords:- *Traditional Markets, Drug Sellers, "Complications" Theater Performances*

I. INTRODUCTION

Theatrical events on stage or not, indoors or in open fields, are inherent in human life or the audience's society. It is intertwined with such complex human problems. It can almost be said that problems or conflicts experienced by humans are the sources or basis of theater creation. Therefore, some people say that "conflict" is the "soul" of a theatrical performance. Meanwhile, theatrical events are social realities that are interpreted to be manifested on the stage, which is then referred to as "stage reality". The reality which of course is no longer the same as the "original reality". However, it tries to present the events and tensions

of the conflict with the same intensity. The theater is a realm of performing arts that describes the actions in life, along with the times it continues to develop with various forms to accommodate the expression of its activists (Yhovy Hendrica Sri Utami, Sahrul N, 2019).

Most audiences, to comprehend theater as a social reality, tend to understand it without exploring deeper into the context. Interpret theater performances as nothing more than entertainment. While a small part of the audience (usually observers or critics) tries to identify the idioms presented on stage, parse them based on a certain frame of mind; sociology, anthropology, semiology, and so on, to understand the meaning of the show more deeply. Contemporary Indonesian art performances are parts of contemporary concepts. Contemporary performances are not only spectacles created and performed by today's humans but show that also reflect liberation (Suherjanto, 2008).

This paper tries to explain the problem of theater as a social reality and theater as a stage reality. The discussion about the two is not only about the perpetrators, but also the audience. Talking about shows/spectacles, the discussion can't be separated from what is shown and who is watching. The social events in question are events that take place in the community, especially in people's markets or also called traditional markets, which factually present a spectacle, namely drug sellers. Events and social phenomena of drug sellers are often found in traditional markets, even drug sellers can be said to be the "icon" of traditional markets in Nusantara. This drug seller has his strategy as an attraction. So, every time there is a drug seller in the market, it will always look crowded with people. In this paper, we try to stretch it so that it can be read as more than just a social reality. But on the other hand, it is also read as a theatrical event packed with theatrical elements.

In general, drug sellers can be seen in traditional markets. Sometimes they also trace a considerable distance in the hope that their wares will be sold. Because of their nomadic tendencies, drug sellers usually simply sell their wares; spread the tarp as a base, then put/arrange the medicines to be sold, and one chair to sit on. In addition, the attributes as a model consisting of various materials, such as speakers, scissors, knives, and several other objects that can convince buyers about the effectiveness of the drugs being sold. The drugs sold are usually drugs that are processed traditionally, for diseases such as scabies, tinea versicolor, sprains, and others. Of course, the price is slightly cheaper than the drugs in pharmacies. Once again, what's interesting about the phenomenon of these itinerant drug sellers is their selling style. They do this by conducting various demonstrations and attractions so that buyers believe in the

efficacy of the drugs being sold. The power of suggestion, improvisation, and spontaneity became the main capital of drug dealers.

In the middle of the process of drug sellers to "enchant" potential buyers, there is also an interaction between these potential buyers. Sometimes, they try to glance at each other, measuring from eye to eye how far they believe the truth about the efficacy of the drugs being sold. Furthermore, they will whisper to each other, share experiences or knowledge gained from neighbors or other relatives. Until it comes to a point, whether it's the truth (which they think does work), belief, or trial and error, the buyer will either reach into his pocket or walk away. What is interesting is not whether the drug is sold or not, but the tug-of-war between the seller and the buyer that takes place throughout the event. As long as people are watching, surround the drug seller. This negotiation process sometimes lasts quite a long time, from the morning to noon, and then continues into the afternoon. Until everyone goes home. So, behind the buying and selling processes, drug sellers must plan tricks, tactics, strategies, or charm techniques that they will try -consider step by step- to attract the interest of the public (audience) to buy. Of course, the technique needs to be trained to master it thoroughly. Instead of being caused by the drug's efficacy, it is caused by the technique, which has a significant influence on the audience's decision to purchase the drugs being sold.

II. DRUG SELLERS IN SOCIAL REALITY – TRADITIONAL MARKET

Theater needs an audience. The director considers the audience. It turns out that all of these are theories that place the audience in a decisive role—whether or not a spectacle is worth watching. This can be seen or tested when viewed from the enthusiasm of the audience during the performance. Will the audience last until the show is over and maybe even more? Or they move one by one throughout the show so that only a few pairs of eyes remain. Then the fate of a performance (art) can be seen from there. Therefore, the audience plays a vital role in a show. It has an impact not only on its survival but also on the development of an art form, art group, or the like.

The stage of the show is not only attractive to the performers and directors, but also the audience. The audience sometimes also wants to take part in the show they watch, by trying to build interaction with the perpetrator (drug sellers) in the form of answers, questions, and so on. This can be seen from the attraction of drug sellers in traditional markets. This itinerant drug sellers style, if seen with a performing arts approach, becomes something that the perpetrators (drug sellers) do not realize has the power of mass suggestion, which can be found in various performing arts, especially theater. The suggestion in question is something that can make an impression on the minds of the audience. Thus, in Eugenio Barba's terms, it is an evocative dramaturgy, the tactics of performance to imprint it in the memory of the audience (Eugenio Barba, 2010). This had become a hot topic of discussion (whether it

was praise or criticism), and more than that, it could influence the creative work of other artists in their work.

In the performing arts in general, there are terms called mystery, climax, anticlimax, surprise, suspense, spectacle, and so on. It seems that the social events of street drug sellers, "actors" or the traders themselves, even though they are not based on theoretical knowledge or experience with the standards of performing arts, have approached the "rules" known as the terms/concepts as mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph. This means that it can be said that social events such as the phenomenon of drug traffickers are performing arts. Especially when viewed from the perspective of performance studies (reading performing arts holistically), which dilutes the understanding between performing arts and social reality; events or phenomena in daily life, such as phenomena/events of drug dealers in traditional markets. According to Jaeni, performing art comes from human daily performances (Jaeni, 2014). Referring to the owner of performance studies, Richard Schechner in Jaeni also explained that performance is a broad field and is always related to performances, actions, events that are in our environment (Jaeni, 2014). In a different phrase, Dede Pramayoza in his introduction to performances explains that shows (another term for performances) are not only understood as intentional events but also events that can happen in everyday life in various situations (Simatupang, 2013).

Generally, when opening or in the middle of the show, drug sellers use techniques and strategies to gather the masses (buyers) by demonstrating various kinds of attractions while giving speeches using loudspeakers and occasionally shouting to surprise the people around them. Shouts and surprises are also part of the merchant's tactics. In addition, to make the audience or potential buyers more crowded, these drug dealers use other tricks, namely conspiring with the audience. In other words, the two or three spectators who were among the other spectators, were friends of the drug seller himself. Suppose one of them was instructed to have stood near the merchant from the start. The others followed a few moments later. Even the spectators of this "order" even participated in the bidding and buying of the drugs being sold. The main purpose of such an effort is of course to lead the beliefs of other viewers, to believe that the drugs being sold are efficacious (in Javanese terms it is called *entul*).

Another trick that is often used and has a big effect on increasing the audience's confidence is when the "ordered" audience asks drug sellers to prove it by practicing it. So the drug seller proves to the audience the "order" so that the evidence is clear to other viewers that the drug being sold can be useful and efficacious. This practice is always carried out by "acting" or pretending to "sacrifice" himself. For example, by giving his hand to be pecked by a snake. After being pecked or bitten by a snake, the drug dealer applies the drug, which is his trade ingredient, to the snakebite mark. In reality, the snake is no longer venomous. After that, the "ordered audience" seemed to feel better because of the effects of the drug that had been applied. The final part

of the "scene" is very important because it serves to lead the viewer's view to a conclusion.

Another thing that is often done to attract the audience is to do magic tricks. It's not meant to convince the audience about the effectiveness of the drugs being sold, but just for entertainment. The magic attraction that is often performed or seen is by tying one of the supporters with a chain, then locking and putting them in a tent or cage covered with cloth. After that, the bound supporter came out of the tent in an untied state. Earlier, remove the chain link. In fact, perhaps the key to the padlock that had been tied with a chain was already in the hands of the supporter when he was put into the tent or cloth cage, so he could easily release the chain. These supporters do not pretend to be spectators or buyers. His existence was even obvious from the start, helping drug dealers when needed, preparing tools, and so on. Things like this are what drug sellers do to convince potential buyers and gather an audience so that the audience and potential buyers are willing to stick around to witness the next event. It is possible until the drug seller finishes selling.

It doesn't end there. Another thing that drug sellers often do to convince potential buyers is to describe the events that they have experienced. Such are the various tactics (charm techniques) that are carried out. All of this is nothing more than a trick or strategy to get the audience's attention so that they can survive until the drug sold out.

III. DRUG SELLER IN REALITY THEATRICAL STAGE

In realizing ideas, an artist is required not only to "know (knowledge) about what", but also "know (knowledge) about how". In other words, it is called know-what and know-how (Piliang, 2018). As a result, artists are expected to know more than just one thing, such as what art is, but also how to create works of art. Furthermore, in the practice of creating works of art, it is also necessary to prepare some kind of tactic or strategy so that the works displayed can be appreciated by the public. Not infrequently, this is forgotten by the creator. Even though this element is a 'charm technique', it can amaze and surprise the audience. The tactic or strategy in question is a spectacle. Acrobatics and magic are performed as spectacles to surprise the audience (something unexpected appears suddenly) (Dra. Yudiaryani, 2002). From this form, finally, the audience is given a surprise that is felt to be something impossible to happen, but can be seen, proven, and enjoyed when the event/action takes place. Vera & Crossan in Afrizal H explained that the concept of improvised theater is often associated with a collaboration with actors to receive suggestions from the audience and create events and scenes on stage without any script. Nevertheless, the relationship between improv and theater goes beyond this particular type of performance (Afrizal, H, Yusril, Susandro, 2020). From this perspective, it is very possible that this form of theater, which is based on the reality of selling traditional medicine, is the spirit of post-dramatic theatre. Afrizal H explained that the presence of post-dramatic theater tendencies in Europe-America cannot be separated from the desire to

explore the possibility of a more innovative theatrical form, beyond merely touching the text of drama scripts. The spirit of the postmodern era became an important momentum for the presence of these new art forms, especially theater (Afrizal, 2021). The same thing was also emphasized by Cucum Cantini explaining that the post-dramatic theory expressed by Lehman is evidence of the new empathy that has occurred in the face of European and American performances, especially theater arts, which began in the 1960s, the consequence of which was a paradigm shift in the discussion of theater science and gave rise to performance studies as a discipline (Cantini, 2018).

The social reality of drug sellers in traditional markets is used as a basis for creative ideas which are then worked into the form of a theatrical performance entitled 'Complications' by Kurniasih Zaitun (commonly called Tintun). Although this work has been staged for a long time, the ideas and methods of its creation are still worth revisiting. Because, first, creative artists will bring people to a deeper aesthetic taste, not tastes that lead to shallow art (Dharsono Sony Kartika, 2016); second, the problems that are often encountered when talking about the creative process, especially in the sphere of theater artists, are that many do not record their creative processes, thus forgetting the problems encountered along the way, and how to overcome them. Furthermore, because of this carelessness, of course, in the end, he was hesitant in formulating a method that became his style.

From the properties, costumes, artistic arrangements, and the atmosphere built by the drug dealer, in the end, there is something that is felt by the audience to be something that can be believed and believed, although it is sometimes difficult for common sense to accept so that after the audience watches a drug dealer's performance, it is as if they are invited to get involved and get involved in the events that are presented. Drug sellers in these traditional markets provide properties such as clippings, brochures, photos of trees or nature, as well as humans who are dressed in strange costumes (Zaitun, 2016). Things like this are quite common, viewers who buy drugs often tell others what they have witnessed.

From this, it can be concluded that selling drugs has a specific form. The drug seller seemed to have the skills and techniques a stage actor should have. The value of the suggestions presented can lull the audience into dissolving, being stunned, amazed, and confident in what the drug dealer is doing, which can be proven by the number of spectators who seem to survive and continue to grow to be able to watch, listen to stories, and watch the attractions presented by the drug seller. Without realizing it, or maybe realizing it, the story and the value of the suggestion are bought by the audience (not the medicine).

In acting, the drug seller also has very high improvisational power. With each show, you never lose your mind and run out of story material to trade. If there is an "accident" (something that is not desirable), drug sellers can make this situation normal and even make it seem like it should be. Drug dealers are actors who have experience with

actual and collaborative events. For example, by telling strange events (three-headed snakes, tigers giving birth to humans, etc.).

This also includes an effort to support curiosity and engage the audience to feel at home and endure. As stated earlier, drug sellers have the ability to act (theatrical term), because, in addition to selling drugs, they also tell stories, play mysteries, suggest, the ability to perform acrobatics, and so on. So, with his abilities, he is said to be an extraordinary actor, if we look at it from the point of view of acting. The development of dramatic action by an actor is basically done by utilizing two devices, namely: (1) the body; and (2) his voice (Novianto, 2020). Apart from that, which is just as important, in this drug-selling show, it can be played anywhere and anytime. This pattern is the same as the concept of traditional theater performances found in various regions in Indonesia.



Fig. 1: One of the scenes in the show, where traders arrange wooden boxes containing medicinal drugs and various other properties (Photo: Kurniasih Zaitun)

Location or place is something that is not too burdensome on the show, so it can be played in the field, arena stage, proscenium stage, or even be displayed in unexpected places, such as markets, halls, parking lots, overhang shops, or even on highways. However, if "selling drugs" is made and transferred into the concept of a complete artistic performance, then issues of artistic logic, psychology of the audience, aesthetic values, and philosophy, as well as the attractions that are played, will certainly be something that needs to be considered. Perhaps this is where the expertise and foresight of a creator (director) are required to be able to apply it to the form of theatrical performance art, both in terms of the story told and the form of the desired event.

Selling drugs can be said to be a total theater performance, in which it contains various complexities of the performing arts itself. The "scene" contains several aspects, such as drug dealers, story elements, music, dance, visual arts (property and setting), acrobatic movements, and magic. The manner of delivery is familiar and communicative with the audience. The distance between the audience and the drug dealer was very thin. Even so, this drug seller is very controllable and understands the needs desired by the community (audience). Drug sellers are also

very aware of diseases that are endemic and symptomatic in the community. This is what is interesting about the phenomenon of selling drugs.

So, the concept of selling drugs was chosen not only from the point of view of its physical form. But rather to capture the essence and substance of selling the drug itself. The form and seller of this drug will later develop the concept of this show both from the show's structure and texture as communication techniques, suggestions, mystery, suspension, spectacle, and surprise. What the writer wants to offer further is how a theatrical performance has a balanced power between stories and events.

The elements and strengths contained in the theater itself will be explored. We will see elements of physical activity such as acrobatics, the element of surprise by presenting magic, talking with various characters, the power of improvisation, the value of suggestion, and so on. In the theory and concept of acting, an actor is required to be able to do anything (singing, dancing, visualizing, and so on).

But selling drugs is still selling bragging. What the drug seller does and presents to his audience that matters most is the power of the story, not the effectiveness of the drug. The events that are presented are only the ability of value suggestions. In carrying out their activities, drug sellers are very knowledgeable about and understand the needs and phenomena that develop in society, both community diseases and actual events in the community itself. For this reason, an alternative to this drug-selling theater can take place anytime and anywhere.

Many ordinary people also say that drug sellers are the same as actors. They sell drugs using complete equipment and also use attractive and deliberately prepared costumes. In the storytelling, the drug seller departs from the events that surround him. The stories presented by drug sellers use everyday language and are easy for the audience to understand. This story is not bound by a systematic plot. They respond more to the events that occur around them, both when selling and in their daily lives. Then, in the end, they focused on the issue of drugs to be sold. For example, by responding to audiences who come or also hot disease issues in the community.



Fig. 2: Acrobatic action in one of the theatrical performance scenes (Photo: Kurniasih Zaitun)

When playing a role in peddling their wares, drug dealers often improvise or show spontaneity. This is done as an effort so that the merchandise sells by telling experiences or whatever as an allure to potential buyers (the audience).

Showing is an act of various expressions. Likewise, with the attraction of selling drugs, However, it should not be considered a performing art. Whereas in selling drugs, there are stories about how effective the drugs are, there are also characters who tell stories and have attractions that are able to hold the audience. In fact, it can be used as a form of theatrical performance. Where the character is called an actor, while magic and acrobatics are acting, and some attractions are demonstrated using properties that can convince the audience. This drug seller is only one person, as a storyteller, and can be described as a monologue.



Fig. 3: Seen in the market (playing arena), buyers (audience) crowded around the drug dealers. Meanwhile outside, there were also spectators sitting in a semi-circle.

(Photo: Kurniasih Zaitun)

Drug sellers as an actual social phenomenon can be said to fit the current context. The texts revealed by the drug sellers are in line with the events and topics that are being discussed in the community. The factual reality that is presented on stage can also be called "reality", even though it is an image or an illusion. However, with the creation of illusions that are played in this way, the audience is led to the real event area.

IV. CONCLUSION

Many things are usually ignored as people go about their daily activities. Various important events pass by without stopping in the view, much less attracting attention. As a result, it is not uncommon for people to miss things that are more important than what they are doing, or to do things that are not as important as what they are missing. Such problems are quite obvious when you stop and stay silent for a moment to observe the events around you, especially in traditional markets. Because in the middle of the transaction between the seller and the buyer, there are also complaints about household issues, relations with relatives, neighbors, and even mentions of economic,

political, and religious issues, so they can also jump to the issue of neighbors who have just bought a luxury car. Therefore, on the one hand, the audience is the actor; people passing by in the market, need to be reminded again of events in which there may be things that were missed. However, among other traders, drug sellers tend to be attractive and impressive in selling their wares. So, through drug sellers, various stories were held.

The event of drug sellers selling their wares always has its charm. Because the selling style of a drug seller looks different from other sellers. Likewise, when viewed from the perspective of performance, such as monologue theater. Instead of presenting an event that was built by the actions of several actors, monologue theater only expresses one's problem, whether it's his problem or someone else's problem. In contrast to drug sellers, he really provides a solution to an issue that others face. With this attraction, what is desired is not sympathy or empathy from the audience, but rather that the audience is 'aware' that what is in front of them is a solution so that the problem can be resolved. Therefore, starting from the process through which he was able to demonstrate it, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of traveling drug sellers; from one market to another, is always interesting as the basis of creation to be explored. Because (again to emphasized) drug sellers' aim is not to attract sympathy or empathy, but to 'wake up' the audience.

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