

One Night Journey in Indonesia Celebrating the 63rd Indonesian Independence Day

By Shirley Ghozalli. Edited by Moira Blake

On Saturday, 6th September, the long-awaited event called "One Night Journey in Indonesia" finally came to the Globe Theatre, Palmerston North. It was the fruit of collaboration between the Indonesian students at IPC and those from Massey University (combined as the Indonesian Students Association) with the Indonesian community living in Palmerston North, and sponsored by the Asia NZ Foundation and the Indonesian Embassy.

This event, which was also known by its short name "One Night", was held to celebrate the 63rd Independence Day of the Republic of Indonesia on 17th August. Although it was the second year for the Indonesian Students Association to invite guests from Palmerston North community to celebrate Indonesian Independence Day with them, it was the first time for the association to actually hold a fully choreographed show with lighting, stage decorations, audio and video arrangements. Included was a rare performance by a famous Indonesian traditional dance artist, Mr Didik Nini Thowok.

Thanks to the creativity and the resourcefulness of the students, the Globe Theatre's lobby was turned into a cultural display, with traditional music playing in the background. Strange and beautiful traditional art and craft products were arranged on the walls and tables. On one of the tables, the process of making 'batik', Javanese traditional cloth, was described. This was illustrated by a display of the tools and materials used in the process. Souvenirs, snacks and refreshments were offered to the guests before the show started.

Coordinated by Satya Ayu Duhita (a 2007 IPC student) and Cendra Perkasa (a Massey University student), the performances were assembled to simulate a guided tour/journey around the Indonesian Archipelago. As a background a story was told of a newlywed tourist couple who went to Indonesia for their honeymoon and took a one-night-guided tour to see the cultures, flora and fauna of Indonesia.

The night began at 7.00 pm with a welcome speech from the Indonesian Ambassador, read by the First Secretary, Mr Tri Purnajaya, and two welcome speeches from the Palmerston North Mayor and the Asia New Zealand (AsiaNZ) Foundation representative, read by Satya Duhita. Then the music of Indonesia's national anthem, "Indonesia Raya" (= "the Glorious Indonesia"), was played. It was followed by New Zealand's national anthem "God Defend New Zealand/Aotearoa" which was performed by a group of performers wearing traditional costumes and playing traditional instruments made from bamboo called "angklung". The voices of the audience could be heard, singing along both of the anthems. After that, the journey began.

The journey covered the 5 biggest islands of the archipelago, starting from the Daerah Istimewa (DI) Aceh on Sumatra Island, where the famous dance "Tari Saman" or "Thousand Hands Dance" was performed to welcome the tourists and the audience. Once the dance was finished, the journey went to the capital city, Daerah Khusus Ibukota (DKI) Jakarta, on Jawa Island, which was represented by its traditional dance "Tari Yapong" and a "bajaj" or three wheeled taxi, a common form of transport. From Jakarta, the journey went on to the central part of the island, the Province of Jawa Tengah, showcasing the 'wayang' shadow puppet show and 'batik' craft. After the wayang, Mr Didik Nini Thowok took centre stage and performed his speciality, demonstrating the exotic art of transgender dance.

Then the audience was transported across the Jawa Ocean to Kalimantan Island (known also as Borneo), where tourists can see the Dayak tribe and culture, the rainforest and the indigenous and endangered primate 'orangutan'. Sulawesi Island (also known as Celebes), came next, featuring the tribe and culture of Toraja and the well-known Bunaken National Marine Park. After Sulawesi, the Province of Papua, the western part of New Guinea Island, was the next destination. Here, the tourists could view the traditional house called 'honai', the Papuan people and culture and a traditional Papuan dance called "Tari Sajojo". The final destination was the island paradise of Bali, where the famous traditional Balinese dance "Tari Kecak" was performed, telling a story from the Ramayana epic.

With "Tari Kecak", the journey was at an end. To conclude the performance, Amanda Chudori, Indah Mayasari and Mariesca Octaviani (3 IPC students) sang an Indonesian song "Tanah Air (=Motherland)", accompanied by Cendra Perkasa (a Massey University student) on the piano and Andre W. Maningkas (an IPC student) on the saxophone. In the middle of the song, Amanda recited a poem, a translation of the song. During the poem, all of the performers came out on the stage and joined in the song. Some of the audience were so moved by the words that they couldn't hold back their tears.

One of our guests commented, "Unforgettable performance, full of colours and flavours, which truly gave the understanding of Indonesian cultures and people." While other guest remarked "It was wonderful to see so many people involved from small children to adults. The playing of the NZ national anthem on Indonesian instruments was a lovely touch."