

Annual INTAN Conference 2015

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

STAGING THE INDONESIAN STREET IN ADELAIDE

A T-shirt seller vigorously spruiking his wares, a proselytising Islamic preacher, marchers in a street parade, arguing housewives, security guards, dangdut singers – these are some of the figures jostling for space on an Indonesian street in the performance *Je.ja.l.an* by theatre group Teater Garasi, to be staged at next month's OzAsia Festival. Depicting contemporary Indonesian life as a crowded urban thoroughfare, site of colourful assertions of identity by diverse social groups and fierce clashes between them, *Je.ja.l.an* poses the perplexing question – *Kita mau kemana?* "Where are we going?" What kind of future lies ahead, is being created right now, on the Indonesian 'street'?

Performance events have long played a vitally important role in Indonesian life, displaying power and wealth, marking important occasions, affirming social bonds and shared cultural values; sometimes conveying potent political critique. This presentation will review the way performances have responded to the momentous social and political changes in Indonesia in recent years – the dismantling of the centralised, authoritarian Suharto regime and its replacement with a more open, regionally-focused political system and greater freedom of expression; vigorous celebration of local cultural, religious and individual identities, and rapid expansion of global cultural influence. Diverse performance activities reflect on different aspects of this picture – plays in regional languages; narratives of local life, staged in everyday spaces; stories of local figures, sometimes delving into dark, previously-suppressed political history; hybrid fusions of local, regional dance and music genres with global forms such as hip-hop and rap. Teater Garasi, meanwhile, addresses the whole, in a series of productions envisioning Indonesia today in all its dynamism and complexity and diversity.

The Indonesian performances at the OzAsia Festival exemplify these trends – Cirebon mask dancers displaying the ongoing power of a local dance tradition; Sambasunda eclectically blending West Javanese gamelan and other Indonesian music with Brazilian samba; Papermoon Puppet Theatre playing out a tragic story of a family caught up in the violent suppression of the Communist movement in 1965-1966, Teater Garasi taking on the big, general issues. Illustrating the workings of contemporary Indonesian performance and its involvement with and reflection on social life, these shows provide rich resources for extending and enlivening understanding of Indonesian society and culture in the classroom.

Presented by Professor Barbara Hatley

*Barbara lectured in Indonesian Studies at Monash University for many years, moved to the University of Tasmania as Professor of Indonesian in 2000, and is currently Professor Emeritus in Asian Studies at UTAS and an honorary adjunct of the School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics at Monash. Her major research interests are in Indonesian performing arts, modern literature and gender studies. Barbara's recent publications include *Javanese Performances on an Indonesian Stage: Contesting Culture, Embracing Change* (NUS Press, 2008), *Theatre and Performance in the Asia Pacific: Regional Modernities in the Global Era* with co-authors Denise Varney, Peter Eckersall and Chris Hudson (Palgrave, 2013), and an edited volume on performance in post-Suharto Indonesia *Performing Contemporary Indonesia: Celebrating Identity, Constructing Community* (Brill, 2015).*

