



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MFA (University of British Columbia, 2006)
BPA (Indonesian Institute of Arts, 1992)

**“Origins, Journeys, Encounters: A Cultural Analysis of Wayang Performances in
North America”**

Interdisciplinary Studies

Thursday, April 13, 2017
10:00AM
David Turpin Building
Room A132

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Astri Wright, Department of Art History & Visual Studies, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Michael Bodden, Department of Pacific & Asian Studies, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Robert Dalton, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Professor Dr. Sumarsam, Faculty of Music, Wesleyan University

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Jon Willis, Department of Physics & Astronomy, UVic

Abstract

This dissertation examines an Indonesian-North American version of an evolving, transnational and hybrid multimedia art form which has come about through forty years of adaptations made by cross-culturally located artists in creative conversation with Indonesian performers involved in the Javanese and Balinese forms of musical theatre known as wayang. Wayang theatre employs puppets and other components including gamelan music (Indonesian percussion instruments, drums, flutes, strings and vocals).

In this research project, I analyze aspects of this hybrid performance by analyzing selected Indonesian-North American wayang performances that I call *wahiyang gaya NA*, as case studies. In order to isolate complex changes and various adaptations of Indonesian wayang elements that occur in the North American setting, I also analyze and contextualize the already hybrid form of authentic Javanese and Balinese wayang performances. I argue that wayang is a hybridized art form that has always been changing historically—at some points more quickly and dramatically than at other periods of time, thus resisting firm categorization that would provide a baseline for comparison.

Wayang performance in North America continues to evolve as a hybridized form that I analyze and categorize in this dissertation. The gradual spread and popularization of wayang has definite historical contexts, namely the early-to-mid 20th century conjunction of decolonization and Third World nationalism, with the more recent decades' layering of multiculturalism and push towards conscious cultural responses to economic globalization. This developing continuum of new hybrid forms spans a spectrum of cultural inclusion and expansion of wayang components. At times these may be seen as wayang influence upon Western performance practice; at other times an entire Indonesian wayang production with additional elements added from Western music, theater, and other disciplines may be presented. These developments signify an enhanced and expanded exchange of cultural products between the nations of the world, taking place in an expanded space for dialogue between the artists of the developed and developing countries. I will show, using case studies, how this process has produced and is producing a new branch of wayang as part of a continuum of hybridized wayang forms. This process has progressed to the point that *wahiyang gaya NA* can be said to represent a new variation in multimedia world art, which uniquely combines elements of local and global artistic practices that can inspire both the artists and audiences. By examining selected performance collaborations that have taken place over the last 40 years, I will provide a detailed analysis, which for the first time, lays out the components that constitute the variation of wayang art performance that has developed in response to geographical and cultural contexts.