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VISUALIZATION OF SOLDIER MOVEMENT IN THE DANCE WORK “SYAGA SINATRIYA” IN THE 2024 NATIONAL PEKSEMA

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Abstract: The dance work Syaga Sinatriya is a creative dance inspired by the characters of Raden Arjuna and Dewi Srikandi, who are renowned warriors skilled in the use of the bow and arrow, or Gendewa. This work was awarded 1st Best Place at the national-level Student Arts Week (PEKSEMA) competition held by Bengkulu State University in 2024. The uniqueness of this dance lies in its portrayal of a warrior rising from inner conflict, then proceeding with resolve, enthusiasm, and perseverance to prepare for battle. The author's interest in this work is based on its outstanding achievements and the quality of its presentation, which merits examination from the perspectives of character and dance movement form. This study focuses on two aspects: content, which describes the warrior's character; and form, which describes the dance movements presented. The analysis employs Samani and Hariyanto's theory of character, as well as Sal Murgiyanto's theory of dance form. The creative concept comprises theme, title, synopsis, scenario, dramatic design, dance type, presentation mode, dancers, techniques, style, stage technical arrangement, makeup and costumes, accompaniment, and properties. It also follows Jacqueline Smith's construction method, which includes initial stimulus, dance type, presentation mode, exploration, improvisation, evaluation, selection, and motif development. The findings of this study are presented in two sections: description of content and description of form. The content description establishes that Syaga Sinatriya raises the theme of a warrior standing guard in preparation for war, while the form description covers presentation scenario, movement analysis, floor patterns, makeup and costumes, properties, musical accompaniment, stage technical arrangement, and lighting. The discussion centers on an analysis of the warrior's character and the form of dance movements. Furthermore, Syaga Sinatriya serves as a form of self-reflection and personal experience for the author, who also participated as one of the dancers throughout the creative process of this work until its successful completion.

Keywords: *Visualization, Character, Warrior, Movement Form*

1. INTRODUCTION

Dance is a form of artistic expression that uses the human body as a medium to convey messages, meanings, and aesthetic values, and serves purposes ranging from traditional ceremonies and entertainment to theatrical performance. Dance is generally divided into two main categories: traditional dance and modern dance. Traditional dance seeks to preserve cultural values and ancient norms, and is therefore passed down from generation to generation, having existed since ancestral times while adhering to established standard conventions or pakem. In contrast, creative dance is a genre of dance marked by renewal, representing an innovation by choreographers or dance creators to produce new works. Creative dance prioritises innovation and modernity in its movements, making it widely encountered across various regions of Indonesia—including East Java, whose traditional dance style remains characterised by assertive, agile, dynamic, and rapid movements. One critical aspect of dance



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is the visualisation of movement: the manner in which physical gestures are presented so they may be seen, understood, and felt by audiences. Visualisation is the process of imagining or conceiving movement, space, and form in the mind or spirit, which is then expressed and realised through physical action.

Developed for the 2024 National-level Student Arts Week (PEKSEMA) competition hosted by Bengkulu State University, the dance work Syaga Sinatriya stands as an example of creative dance. This event provided a platform for students to showcase artistic talent and pursue achievement, drawing approximately 60 participants from across Indonesia and held entirely online. The work was created by two choreographers, Mochamad Rafli Wisnu Triwijaya and Virdha Annora Zavira, adopting the distinctive style of East Java and drawing inspiration from two renowned shadow puppet characters: Raden Arjuna and Dewi Srikandi—both celebrated for their chivalric spirit and exceptional mastery of the bow and arrow, or gendhewa. In the creative process, choreographers draw inspiration from a variety of sources, including social phenomena, historical figures, or local narratives. This process involves more than simply devising movements; it requires the integration of ideas, emotion, and rigorous structure, alongside a series of deliberate stages to produce a complete and cohesive work. As stated by Sal Murgiyanto (1983:4), choreography is defined as the discipline of dance composition or the resulting arrangement of dance; literally, the term means “the writing of group dance”.

Syaga Sinatriya carries the theme of soldiership, embodied in its two-component title: Syaga signifies vigilance, alertness, and dexterity in facing challenges, while Sinatriya refers to a warrior with resolve, spirit, dignity, and perseverance in battle. Collectively, the title represents the preparedness of a soldier who constantly reflects on their own readiness to strengthen mind and body for conflict. The work's uniqueness lies in its portrayal of a soldier rising from physical and spiritual crisis at the lowest point of training, before committing with renewed determination, spirit, and persistence to prepare for war. In broader terms, a soldier is defined as a member of the military trained specifically for combat, duty fulfilment, and national defence. Derived from the Sanskrit prajurite, meaning “brave warrior”, the concept encompasses not only the handling of weapons but also tactical proficiency and skilled marksmanship. In traditional Javanese military culture, particularly under Hindu-Buddhist influence, archers or gendhewa-bearing soldiers served as long-range attackers tasked with protecting frontline forces.

The creation of Syaga Sinatriya also responded to competition requirements mandating new creative works rooted in Indonesian cultural tradition. Developed through successive stages of exploration, improvisation, and evaluation, the piece was awarded 1st Best Place at the 2024 PEKSEMA competition, judged by a panel of experts on its creativity, innovation, and artistic merit. This accolade, together with the work's compelling presentation and depth of character and movement, forms the primary motivation for this study. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the broader field of dance studies,

particularly regarding the analysis of warrior characterisation and movement form in Syaga Sinatriya.

2. METHOD

The dance work Syaga Sinatriya employs the approach outlined by Jacqueline Smith, specifically Construction Method 1, which begins with initial stimulus, type of dance work, mode of presentation, and an exploratory process that culminates in a series of movement motifs. This process commences with observation of the source material, followed by exploration and improvisation that generate motifs, style, and technique, all directed toward realising the intended dance work.

a. Initial Stimulus

Stimulus is defined as anything that arouses inspiration, drives activity, or sparks creative thought. For dance composition, stimuli may be auditory, visual, conceptual, tactile, or kinaesthetic (Smith, 1985:20). The choreographers' primary stimulus stems from their appreciation for shadow puppet performances, as well as personal experience performing as the character Raden Arjuna in Wayang Orang (human puppet theatre). Accordingly, Syaga Sinatriya is adapted from two shadow puppet figures: Raden Arjuna and Dewi Srikandi. These characters were selected as symbols of the warrior spirit, embodying resolve and an unyielding disposition.

b. Dance Type

Syaga Sinatriya is categorised as a dramatic dance. The dramatic type falls within choreographic works centred on narrative themes, yet differs from dance drama or sendratari: it focuses on evoking a specific event or atmosphere rather than unfolding a full storyline (Smith, 1985:27). The choreographers emphasise the development of elements such as dynamics, energy, tempo, and space to construct mood and dramatic patterns that strengthen communication with the audience.

c. Mode of Presentation

Mode of presentation concerns the substance of movements to be performed, conveying specific symbols and signs in detail and original form, alongside distinctive features of the work (Smith, 1985:29). In this performance, the choreographers adopt a representative and symbolic approach. Representative presentation displays original forms or events as they occur in reality, drawing from pre-existing movement symbols to guide the audience's imagination.

d. Exploration

Exploration is the initial phase, described as a playful stage for choreographers and dancers to discover movement motifs that are later assembled into coherent sequences. It encompasses imagining, sensing, and responding to external objects or phenomena. In *Choreography: Form, Technique, Content*, Sumandiyo Hadi defines exploration as the foundational stage of choreography: an investigation into external objects or phenomena, and an experience that generates stimulus to enhance creative capacity (Hadi, 2012:70). This phase involves not only generating ideas but also observing, experiencing, and translating responses to subjects or phenomena. Exploration may arise spontaneously, helping choreographers stimulate creative thinking. Throughout this process, self-discipline and awareness are essential, alongside a clear conceptual foundation and deep understanding of the intended theme, concept, and

character—all of which serve as the primary basis for exploration and unlock potential for development.

Syaga Sinatriya originates from the core concept of portraying a warrior's character. Following competition guidelines, the choreographers drew visual inspiration from two widely recognised shadow puppet figures embodying warrior virtues: Raden Arjuna and Dewi Srikandi. Movement exploration was adapted to the dancers' physical capabilities and limitations, prioritising spontaneity and comfort while grounding all development in the warrior archetype. The two figures guided the formulation of movement patterns and forms, which were refined to align with the work's representational goals. The piece draws heavily on the distinct movement style of East Java, particularly the Arek ethnic tradition. Exploration also incorporated the bow and arrow (*gendhewa*) as a prop, modified and combined with the *cundrik* (dagger) to enhance aesthetic quality. This process yielded a repertoire of patterns and forms that were further developed into innovative variations to avoid monotony, ensuring all techniques and movements remained consistent with the work's core concept.

e. Improvisation

Following exploration, improvisation involves testing and developing movements spontaneously, building upon existing material to generate new possibilities. Sumandiyo Hadi describes improvisation as a trial-and-error process defined by spontaneity, serving as a complementary phase to exploration and composition in strengthening creative expression. It may also be understood as "discovery by chance": even when movements draw on prior learning, the element of spontaneity remains its defining feature (Hadi, 2012:76). Acting as a transition toward composition, this stage allows choreographers to retain comfortable, effective movements while discarding those that are less functional or appropriate, repeating selected material to build physical familiarity.

For Syaga Sinatriya, improvisation expanded and refined movements identified during exploration. Movements were assessed for alignment with the warrior theme and East Javanese Arek style, while remaining anchored to the core subject of soldiership. This phase also informed subsequent decisions regarding floor patterns, movement levels, and structural arrangement.

f. Composition or Structuring

Structuring, or composition, constitutes the final stage of the choreographic process. Sumandiyo Hadi notes that this phase involves selecting, evaluating, arranging, and linking movement motifs into a cohesive whole—the completed choreography (Hadi, 2012:78–79). Sal Murgiyanto similarly defines composition as the organisation of distinct parts to create interrelated elements that form a unified artistic entity (Murgiyanto, 1983:11).

During this stage, movements developed through exploration and improvisation are assembled, while adhering to fundamental dance elements such as motif and form to produce an engaging work. Choreography and music are synchronised to achieve artistic completeness, and movements are further refined to reflect the work's theme and identity. Attention is also given to ensemble cohesion and uniformity in executing patterns and forms.

g. Technique of Concept Transmission

In conveying the work's concept to dancers, the choreographers do not merely demonstrate movements; they first

explain the underlying vision, then guide collective exploration adapted to each dancer's physical attributes and prop interaction. Dancers actively contribute to movement generation, with final selections integrated into the complete motif structure.

Collaborative sharing of ideas is used to accelerate motif development, centred on the vigilant, combat-ready warrior archetype drawn from Arek traditions, and synthesising traits of both Raden Arjuna and Dewi Srikandi. Rehearsals are recorded to facilitate observation, allowing for targeted refinement of techniques that require adjustment.

h. Evaluation Technique

Following exploration, improvisation, and structuring, the evaluation phase revises and refines selected forms, styles, and motifs to identify movements that are functional, aesthetically compelling, and conceptually consistent. Each segment is assessed to ensure it effectively conveys the warrior character, with revisions made to correct misalignments or weaknesses. Rehearsal recordings are reviewed collectively to identify areas for improvement.

i. Selection

Selection, or refinement, follows evaluation. As Jacqueline Smith observes, the opening movement of a dance serves as the first element of its composition; once selected, evaluated, and polished, it establishes the kinetic energy that carries through subsequent sections (Smith, 1985:32). Movements are chosen not only for aesthetic merit but also for their symbolic meaning and functional purpose, prioritising clarity of form, expressive power, and character consistency. Selected material is arranged into a coherent narrative or visual arc, reinforcing the work's distinctive artistic identity.

j. Movement Motif

Jacqueline Smith defines a motif as a simple movement pattern that establishes a foundational energy, which then evolves into a sequential, integrated movement phrase (Smith, 1985:32). Motifs represent the smallest structural unit of a dance—analogueous to words or phrases within a complete sentence. These units are developed, repeated, and arranged to form the full performance. The motifs chosen for Syaga Sinatriya are rooted in simple yet distinctive East Javanese Arek movements, characterised by agility, dynamism, strength, and precision, adapted to reflect the work's thematic and artistic identity.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The dance work Syaga Sinatriya is a creative dance that centres on the theme of the warrior, adapted from two widely revered shadow puppet characters: Raden Arjuna and Dewi Srikandi. The title Syaga Sinatriya carries profound meaning: Syaga denotes vigilance, alertness, and agility in facing challenges, while Sinatriya refers to a warrior defined by determination, spirit, dignity, and unwavering perseverance. Both figures embody courage and an indomitable spirit, making them fitting representatives of the work's theme; notably, both are famed for wielding the same weapon in battle: the bow and arrow, or gendhewa. For this dance, the prop is given a striking design: the bow incorporates a concealed cundrik — a traditional short dagger — which is revealed when the structure is opened. Syaga Sinatriya portrays a warrior of unshakeable resolve, capable of overcoming the dual struggles of inner and physical conflict. The work offers both powerful aesthetic appeal and rich symbolic depth in its portrayal of warrior identity and movement form.



Figure 1. Documentation of the *Syaga Sinatriya* Dance Performance.

Makeup is one of the supporting elements in performing arts. Its primary purpose is to reinforce characterisation, as well as to establish and support the overall concept and atmosphere of a work. For *Syaga Sinatriya*, representative stage makeup is applied to emphasise and strengthen each dancer's character, rendering facial contours sharp and defined to reflect the resolute bearing of warriors. Costume serves to clothe the dancers, while also clarifying the character being portrayed, enhancing aesthetic appeal, and reinforcing the work's visual identity. The costumes in *Syaga Sinatriya* are designed to be understated yet fully aligned with the core theme of soldiership.



Figure 2. Makeup and Costume of the *Syaga Sinatriya* Dance.

The dance work *Syaga Sinatriya* employs a modified bow and arrow (*gendhewa*) incorporating a concealed *cundrik* (dagger). This prop supports the core concept of the work, which portrays warriors adapted from the widely recognised shadow puppet figures Raden Arjuna and Dewi Srikandi, and serves as a powerful visual reinforcement of their identity. The full bow measures 64 centimetres in length and is crafted from fine-grained wood. It is finished in grey or silver paint, with subtle gold accents along the edges to enhance its aesthetic quality. The accompanying *cundrik* is 12 centimetres long, fashioned from carved iron. It forms an integral part of the prop's design: when the bow is opened, a small dagger is revealed within its structure.



Figure 3. Modified Gendhewa Bow and Cundrik Props.

In addition to the supporting elements outlined above, another essential component is the dance accompaniment or music, which functions not only as background sound but also as an integral part of rhythm, dynamics, and expressive movement. For Syaga Sinatriya, the musical arrangement combines both traditional and modern instruments.

The work is presented on a proscenium stage within an enclosed venue, equipped with stage lighting. This stage configuration effectively supports the dramatic presentation of Syaga Sinatriya, particularly in portraying the warrior's emotional journey: grappling with inner conflict, rising from despair, and finally preparing for battle. The lighting design utilises PAR LED fixtures positioned stage left, stage right, and upstage, complemented by Fresnel lights placed downstage to provide general focus and illumination. As this dance work was presented for an online dance competition, the production team selected a venue that would ensure optimal framing of the dancers during filming, while also providing adequate lighting to support the intended atmosphere of the performance.

3.2 Discussion

The dance work Syaga Sinatriya was created specifically for the 2024 National-level Student Arts Week (PEKSEMA) dance competition. In this piece, male dancers represent the character Raden Arjuna, while female dancers represent Dewi Srikandi. The work is performed by an ensemble of five dancers: two male and three female. Syaga Sinatriya portrays the character of a warrior defined by spirit and courage, standing ready to face battle. The work adopts a dramatic narrative structure, which serves as a clear expressive device to help audiences readily grasp its core message and content.

Table 1. Description of the Plot and Scenes in the Syaga Sinatriya Dance.

No.	Adegan	Sub Tema	Motivasi/ isi	Suasana	Durasi
1.	Introduksi	Pengenalan	Pengenalan karakter seorang prajurit yang bersiaga dalam menghadapi perang	Tegas, kuat dan penuh semangat	1 menit
2.	Adegan I	Prajurit bersiaga	Penggambaran seorang prajurit yang bersiap dalam latihan	Tegas, kuat dan penuh semangat	1,5 menit

3.	Adegan II	Muncul konflik	Menggambarkan seorang prajurit yang berlatih hingga muncul konflik jiwa dan raga yang membuat berada pada titik terendah sampai akhirnya bangkit kembali	Tegang, sedih dan penuh semangat	3 menit
4.	Adegan III/ Ending	Kemantapan	Menggambarkan seorang prajurit yang bersiaga dalam medan perang dengan sudah bangkit dari keterpurukan.	Kuat dan penuh semangat	1 menit

The warrior's character is conveyed primarily through sharp facial expression, an upright and powerful posture, and focused gaze. Beyond resolute strength, the portrayal also acknowledges the human dimension of a warrior—including fear, fatigue, and moments of self-doubt. In dance, movement serves to communicate theme, character, and message to audiences. Movements are broadly categorised into two types: pure movement, which prioritises aesthetic beauty without specific symbolic meaning; and meaningful movement, which carries distinct significance or intent. Every movement rests on three core elements: space, time, and energy. In *Syaga Sinatriya*, movement functions not only as an aesthetic device but also as a medium for representing the warrior's journey. Through deliberate treatment of space, time, and energy, each sequence constructs a narrative spanning physical training, inner struggle, and the eventual attainment of mental fortitude. The movements are characterised by firmness, power, dynamism, and vitality, mirroring the alert readiness of a warrior preparing for battle, and draw heavily on the distinctive movement idiom of East Java.

Table 2. Description of a Selected Dance Movement in the *Syaga Sinatriya* Dance.

No.	Movement Type	Count	Movement Description	Figure
Scene 2				

1.	Lift the Gendhewa	3x8+4	(Male Dancers) 1. Raise the right hand to lift the gendhewa, while the left hand assumes the ngambeng position. 2. Turn to face forward, bend the right leg diagonally, lean slightly toward the left, and extend the gendhewa forward. 3. Step forward with the right foot, then execute a diagonal tanjak stance. Extend the right arm diagonally and bend the left arm. (Female Dancers) 1. Raise the right hand to lift the gendhewa, while the left hand assumes the ngambeng position. 2. Turn to face forward, bend the right leg diagonally, lean slightly toward the left, and extend the gendhewa forward. 3. Step forward with the right foot, then execute a diagonal tanjak stance. Extend the right arm diagonally and bend the left arm.	   (Male Dancer)   
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				(Female Dancer)
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4. CONCLUSION

According to the report, the choreographic work Syaga Sinatriya is a creative dance that visualizes the character of a warrior, drawing inspiration from the shadow puppet figures Raden Arjuna and Dewi Srikandi. This visualization is embodied through movements that are firm, powerful, dynamic, and full of vigor—representing the disciplined, resilient, courageous, responsible, and self-sacrificing nature of a warrior. In this dance, movement serves not only as an aesthetic element but also as a medium for conveying meaning, depicting struggle, inner conflict, readiness, and the spirit of soldiery. The visualization of the warrior character is further reinforced by complementary performance elements that work in harmony: varied floor patterns, stage makeup, functional warrior-themed costumes, a modified gendhewa (bow) prop fitted with a cundrik (dagger), musical accompaniment blending Javanese pelog-tuned gamelan with modern instruments, and stage design and lighting that amplify dramatic atmosphere. Together, these elements form an artistic unity that firmly establishes Syaga Sinatriya as a visual representation of an authoritative, resilient, and distinct warrior figure. Accordingly, the visualization of warrior movements in Syaga Sinatriya does not merely showcase aesthetic beauty; it also acts as an expressive medium that conveys the core values of soldiery through creative dance. This work demonstrates that the integration of movement and supporting performance components can produce a dance presentation rich in symbolic meaning, defined by strong character, and possessing complete artistic merit.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The dance work Syaga Sinatriya is also intended to serve as a reference for choreographers, dancers, academics, and researchers in developing dance works with warrior themes. Dancers are expected to continuously refine their mastery of movement techniques and character expression, so that the core values of soldiery may be conveyed optimally. Choreographers are encouraged to pursue ongoing innovation in creative development while preserving the fundamental values embodied in this work. Furthermore, this piece is expected to provide a benchmark for future researchers examining the visualisation of warrior movements in other dance works, thereby enriching scholarly studies in the field of dance.

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