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Body of Evolution: Visualization of Bodily Characteristics in the Dramatic Dance of Jaranan Art

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Abstract: Body of Evolution is a choreographic exploration that visualizes human bodily characteristics through a dramatic approach, grounded in the structure of scene divisions within the traditional Jaranan performance from Trenggalek. This work is based on the idea that the evolution of the human body across different stages of life childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, closely aligns with the three core scenes in Jaranan: kiprah, budalan, and perangan. The choreographer interprets these scenes as representations of physical and psychological development. The kiprah scene symbolizes childhood through playful and exploratory movement; budalan reflects adolescence with its curiosity and search for identity; and perangan illustrates adulthood, marked by emotional control and a sense of responsibility. Using a dramatic structure, this piece emphasizes expression, emotion, and bodily language in each scene transition to deliver a strong aesthetic experience for the audience. The primary aim of this creation is to reinforce corporeal language in contemporary performance art based on tradition, while also offering a creative innovation that repositions the existence of Jaranan in today's modern and entertainment-driven era. Through this work, the choreographer encourages communities and artists to explore local cultural assets in a creative and contextual manner so that traditional arts continue to live and evolve.

Keywords: *Body of Evolution, Jaranan, Bodily Characteristics, Dramatic, Contemporary Choreography*

1. INTRODUCTION

Performing arts are a form of artistic expression manifested through actions and interactions presented before an audience, either individually or in groups, within a specific time and space. As stated by Y. Sumandiyo Hadi (2011:121–122), performing arts have no real meaning without the presence of spectators, listeners, or observers who provide appreciation, feedback, and response. This highlights the nature of performing arts as a medium of communication between the artist and the public. In the creative process, artists require ideas or concepts, which can emerge from social phenomena, personal experiences, or local cultural traditions. These ideas are then developed through a series of processes into a unique and aesthetically valuable work of art.

Traditional performing arts are characterized by their hereditary nature, passed down from generation to generation within a community. One such traditional art that remains vibrant and evolving today is Jaranan, a cultural performance from Trenggalek Regency, East Java. This art features dance movements using horse-shaped props made from woven bamboo, accompanied by Javanese gamelan music. Jaranan typically narrates the journey of a warrior combating evil forces and plays a vital role in local ceremonies such as weddings, circumcisions, and other communal events. It is deeply embedded in the cultural identity of the Trenggalek people,



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transcending age and gender, making it a universal art form. The performance is usually divided into several age-based groups children, teenagers, and adults, each presenting unique movement characteristics based on their natural behavior and developmental stage.

In addition to age-based groupings, Jaranan performances are structured into three main scenes: *kiprah*, *budalan*, and *perangan*. Each scene has its own narrative meaning: *kiprah* depicts a warrior training and showcasing their supernatural abilities; *budalan* illustrates the warrior's journey to the battlefield; and *perangan* represents the battle against evil spirits or negative human traits. This narrative structure symbolizes the symbolic journey of the human being in confronting and overcoming internal conflicts.

The division of scenes in Jaranan inspired the choreographer to create a dance work titled *Body of Evolution*. This work presents an analogy between the evolution of the human body from childhood, adolescence, to adulthood, and the three narrative phases in Jaranan. The choreographer perceives a strong connection between physical and psychological development and the storyline progression within the traditional art. As a result, this piece emerges as a new interpretation in the form of dramatic dance, emphasizing bodily expression as its primary mode of communication.

Body of Evolution not only offers an aesthetic experience but also carries the spirit of preserving traditional culture in a contextual and innovative manner. This dance work is centered on two main focuses: first, its content, which explores bodily characteristics reflected in the scene divisions of Jaranan; and second, its form, utilizing a dramatic approach to evoke emotion and differentiate bodily expressions in each scene. The purpose of this creation and its accompanying written analysis is to describe and examine how bodily characteristics are visualized through dramatic elements in *Body of Evolution*, while also contributing to the advancement of traditional-based performing arts in today's contemporary era.

2. METHOD

The term creative method consists of two distinct words combined into one. Method refers to a way or manner. The word "method" or "methodic" originates from the Greek language: *metha*, meaning "through" or "by way of", and *hodos*, meaning "path" or "way". Therefore, a method can be interpreted as a path or procedure that must be followed to achieve a specific goal. Meanwhile, creation comes from the word *cipta*, which refers to the mind's ability to produce or generate something new. Thus, a creative method is a systematic approach to creating something new in order to achieve a particular purpose.

In the dance work *Body of Evolution*, the choreographer applies the construction method in the creative process. The construction method is a procedure for modifying or reconstructing an existing form into a new one with different characteristics and styles. This method involves several stages: starting from the initial stimulus, determining the type of dance, deciding on the mode of presentation, movement exploration, improvisation, analysis and evaluation, and finally, refinement or selection.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results: Process Description

The choreographic process of Body of Evolution was carried out through a series of artistic and methodological stages aimed at producing a dance work that is rich in meaning, aesthetics, and contextual relevance. These stages include: initial stimulus, exploration, improvisation, selection, evaluation, and motif and composition.

1. The initial stimulus emerged from the choreographer's empirical experience as a performer of jaranan, a traditional dance form. The choreographer drew an analogy between the structure of jaranan performances (consisting of the kiprahan, budhalan, and peranan segments) and the evolving characteristics of the human body from childhood, adolescence, to adulthood. This analogy became the conceptual foundation for the narrative and dramatic structure of the dance work.
2. In the exploration phase, the choreographer examined various movement possibilities through bodywork approaches to enhance the dancers' flexibility and physical strength. This exploration involved developing traditional jaranan movements into contemporary dance forms, incorporating acrobatic and dynamic elements such as jumping, spinning, and stances.
3. The improvisation phase allowed dancers the freedom to generate spontaneous movements based on narrative stimuli provided by the choreographer. These improvisational movements were intended to create original and aesthetically distinctive forms that aligned with the narrative framework and the dancers' unique physicalities.
4. The selection phase involved choosing movements generated during exploration and improvisation. The choreographer selected movements that aligned closely with the concept and eliminated those that did not support the narrative and aesthetic coherence of the piece.
5. The evaluation stage encompassed a comprehensive review and refinement of various elements, including movement structure, musical accompaniment, makeup and costume design, stage decoration, and lighting. Adjustments included blending diatonic and pentatonic musical elements, designing modern costumes that retain traditional features, and replacing initial props with a tiered wooden stage structure symbolizing the phases of human bodily evolution. Lighting was arranged using variations in yellow intensity to create a dramatic atmosphere without introducing additional color schemes.
6. The motif and composition phase, all elements were integrated into a cohesive choreographic work. The choreographer synthesized narrative, dramatic structure, movement, music, costume, stage decoration, and lighting to form a unified composition, resulting in a dance work that is not only expressive and communicative but also possesses a distinctive and authentic aesthetic quality.

3.2 Discussion: Description of the Work

The dance work Body of Evolution is a choreographic exploration that adopts the dramatic structure of the traditional Jaranan performance, reinterpreted through the lens of human bodily evolution. The choreographer integrates two interrelated concepts,

traditional dramatic structure and bodily transformation, as a unified and inseparable foundation for artistic creation. This work represents three stages of human development through sequential scenes: *kiprah* (childhood phase), *budhalan* (adolescent phase), and *perangan* (adulthood phase), each embodying distinct emotional and psychological characteristics.

Grounded in traditional aesthetics, the choreographer applies contemporary movement vocabulary and bodily exploration to synthesize traditional values with innovative forms. This dance creation functions not only as an artistic expression but also as a strategic effort to revitalize traditional performing arts, which are gradually losing their appeal in modern society. Through this approach, the choreographer aims to foster renewed awareness among traditional artists and to cultivate appreciation for local cultural heritage among younger generations.

3.2.1 Description of the Form

In the creation of the dance work "Body of Evolution", the structural form becomes a central focus that outlines the essential components of choreography. These elements include storyline, dramatic design, scenario, movement description, floor patterns, makeup and costume, lighting, and accompaniment. All elements are integratively designed to produce a compelling and performable dance piece.

a. Workflow

Scene	Duration	Sub-theme	Motivation	Atmosphere
Introduction	3 minutes	Depiction of the three human bodily characteristics: childhood with its playful phase, adolescence with its quest for identity, and adulthood with its sense of responsibility.	Flashback depiction of the three scenes through symbolic representations	Calm, crowded, abstract.
Scene 1	4 minutes	The depiction of the scene <i>kiprahan</i> by presenting the nature	Depiction of the <i>kiprahan</i> scene with the practice of martial arts	Crowded, noisy, tense

		of a small child who is playing happily		
Scene 2	3 minutes	The depiction of the <i>budhalan</i> scene presents the unstable nature of teenagers, a period of searching for their identity.	Depiction of the <i>budhalan</i> scene with attractive and <i>geculan</i> movements	Confused, tense, funny
Scene 3	4 minutes	The depiction of war scenes by presenting mature characters who have a sense of responsibility and can fight their own lusts.	Depiction of war scenes with attractive movements, body contact	Crowded, noisy, increasingly tense towards the climax
Ending	2 minutes	A depiction of a human being who can control his lusts and can choose the right path	The depiction of the ending with a crouching, stable motion	Calm, majestic, silent

3.2.2 Dramatic Design

The dramatic design employed in this work is based on Jacqueline Smith's double-cone dramatic structure (1985:27), which aims to construct and develop the atmosphere of the performance starting from the introduction, progressing through conflict and resolution, and culminating in a dramatic climax. According to Hadi (2003:30), conflict or climax must be created as a representation of the peak dramatic point of a story or theme being presented. The dramatic structure in the dance work *Body of Evolution* seeks to create a narrative framework and emotional atmosphere capable of stirring the audience's feelings. The choreographer aims to build tension and

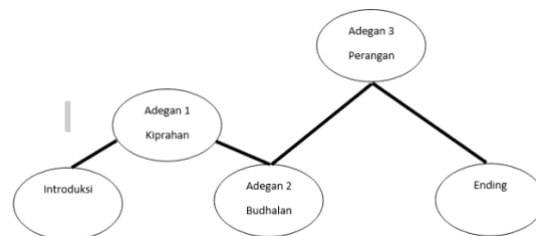
layered emotions that draw the audience into the flow of the performance.

The use of the double-cone dramatic structure in this work provides a fluid composition, allowing for deeper development of characters and atmospheric plots. This enables the choreographer to create dramatic intensity within the performance to captivate the audience. The introductory scene functions as the initial presentation of the dance, followed by Scene 1 which introduces the beginning of the conflict, represented by a warrior in training with high-intensity movements. Scene 2 serves as the first dramatic climax, portraying a warrior's journey to the battlefield. This is expressed through vigorous movements such as running, jumping, spinning, and other dynamic actions, all intended to evoke a sense of tension.

Scene 2 also includes comedic movements (*geculan*), playful gestures and humorous vocal expressions from the dancers. This serves as a descent from the first climax, acting as a bridge toward the second and more intense climax. Scene 3 represents the second and highest climax, marked by extreme tension. The choreographer conveys the chaos of war using acrobatic movements, body contact, and responsive, high-energy motion, culminating in an intense climax. The ending resolves this peak of dramatic tension through slow-motion movements that symbolize the final stage of a human life journey.

The creative process behind *Body of Evolution* employs a dramatic dance design approach. This is evident through the presentation of abstract movement, atmosphere, and emotional expression, without detailed narrative structures. As Smith (1985) explains, dramatic dance emphasizes events or moods rather than a structured storyline. In this work, the choreographer deliberately omits detailed characters and plots, drawing instead on the motivation of traditional *jaranan* performance structure. The aim is to delve deeper into the movement vocabulary and symbolic elements to enrich the composition.

The choreographic ideas and innovations emerged from the movement and physical explorations of the dancers, forming something new in the creative process. The concept behind *Body of Evolution* is the fusion of traditional and contemporary elements, rooted in *jaranan* performance traditions and the choreographer's empirical observations. These two concepts are interpreted through symbolic dance movements that convey embedded stories and meanings.



Pictures 3.1. Dramatic Double Cone Dance Work "Body of Evolution"

The choreographer of the dance work *Body of Evolution* constructs movement forms and symbols to emphasize the atmosphere of conflict intended to be portrayed. The structured conflict atmosphere becomes a crucial element in building the overall narrative structure. The dramatic design applied in this dance work is the double-cone dramatic design model (Smith, 1985:27), which serves

as a narrative flow framework that highlights the peak of conflict or climax within the storyline. This model illustrates the escalation of dramatic intensity, the progression toward the first climax, a descent phase, and a transition leading to a second and more dramatic climax, culminating in a final resolution.

The dramatic structure (dramatic ladder) in *Body of Evolution* begins with an introductory scene functioning as an initial exposition. It then progresses to Scene 1, which presents the first conflict. Scene 2 follows as a transitional descent from the first conflict to the second, while Scene 3 introduces the second and final conflict, also serving as the climax of the performance. The ending scene portrays the anti-climax, representing the resolution and final outcome of the work.

3.2.3 Motion Description



Pictures 3.2. Performance of Works "*Body of Evolution*"

The creation of movement in the dance work *Body of Evolution* employs exploratory techniques by both the choreographer and the dancers. Exploratory technique is a fundamental element in creating movements within a dance piece to ensure that they contain meaningful elements and aesthetic beauty. As explained by Bandem (2001:06), exploratory techniques involve several essential stages, beginning with determining the theme, title, and topic of the work in accordance with the desired phenomena or narrative. This stage includes ideas, concepts, thoughts, and imagination related to the chosen phenomenon or concept. The next stage is improvisation, which involves selecting, distinguishing, and considering movements to create contrast and harmony within the work. This is followed by the composition phase, where movement symbols discovered during improvisation are grouped and combined into a cohesive structure with a clear narrative impression. At this point, various movement symbols are integrated with other elements such as music accompaniment, makeup, and costume design to strengthen the narrative intended by the choreographer.

Through movement exploration techniques, the choreographer engages in a creative process using their bodily memory and prior artistic experiences. This allows them to produce movements that are both comfortable to perform and aligned with the intended narrative. The choreographer also applies body training techniques to examine the dancers' strengths, uniqueness, and talents, thus creating harmonious, comfortable, and original movements that emerge from the dancers' own bodies. Murgiyanto (1983:4) states that a dancer must possess awareness and control over their body, understanding its capabilities and limitations. Through intense and continuous training, dancers can develop highly flexible movements. This training involves three key elements: energy, related to the dancer's strength and stamina for high-intensity, fast-paced movements; space, which refers

to directional use in movement; and time, required for executing motions. Frequent practice yields optimal results, allowing dancers to move more freely and improve their physical capabilities.

Indrayuda (2009:23) asserts that intensive and optimal body training in dancers is crucial in determining the quality of dance technique and performance. A well-developed dance technique is essential in presenting a dance work. Insufficient technical ability can hinder the effective communication of messages and concepts to the audience. The development of dance techniques through body training is an essential component of dance mastery, ensuring that the resulting movements are not merely individualistic but integrated and harmonious within the performance. Body training and movement exploration serve as the foundational pillars in delivering a meaningful artistic message that resonates with the audience.

The stylistic choice in *Body of Evolution* is based on the *Mataraman* style. The choreographer deliberately chose this style to emphasize the physicality of the dancers, drawing on the traditional background of *jaranan* performance, which is then further developed with elements of modern and contemporary movement. This approach aims to generate a fresh impression while maintaining traditional artistic elements and adding emotional depth, preventing monotony. The chosen style is deemed suitable for the theme envisioned by the choreographer. The selection of three dancers in this work was based on the choreographer's consideration of how best to convey the messages and impressions embedded in the piece. All dancers share the same traditional background as performers of *jaranan*, which ensures a shared sense and harmonious movement expression.

In *Body of Evolution*, the choreographer created a total of 30 movement phrases. Each phrase was meticulously crafted to serve as a medium for conveying the message and storyline in line with the work's narrative. These movement phrases are vital in portraying complex scenes and stories. The use of movements with varying intensities, from low to high, provides variety and innovation in expressive movement, drawing the audience into a deeper emotional dimension. Furthermore, the use of three-level staging by the choreographer enhances the mood and adds visual layers to the narrative presentation.

The movement creation process in *Body of Evolution* represents the implementation of movement exploration and embodied expression by the dancers. The exploration technique is utilized to generate appropriate movements and symbolic gestures aligned with the narrative. The choreographer's creative process is informed by bodily experience and aims to produce movements that are both meaningful and physically comfortable for the dancers. Body training is also employed in this creative process due to its essential role in generating a wide variety of movements and achieving harmonious synchrony among dancers. The choreographer meticulously manages each dancer's physical potential to ensure that the movements performed are not individualistic but unified.

The integration of both techniques, movement exploration and body training, is intended to create movements that are not only artistically rich and meaningful but also ensure that the overall performance delivers a clear and compelling narrative. In creating *Body of Evolution*, the choreographer adopts movements from traditional *jaranan* performance and develops them with

contemporary dance elements, producing new movement variations and innovations that support and enrich the work.

3.2.4 Dance Accompaniment



Pictures 3.3. Performance of Works "Body of Evolution"

Musical accompaniment is one of the essential components in a dance work, as it determines both the tempo and rhythm of movement. According to Soedarsono (1977:46), music in a dance performance does not merely serve as a background accompaniment, but rather functions as a crucial element that defines tempo, rhythm, and serves as a cue for dancers to execute movement. Music and dance form an inseparable unity that collectively creates a complex atmosphere and artistic experience.

In the dance work *Body of Evolution*, two types of musical accompaniment are employed: diatonic and pentatonic music. By combining these two musical systems, the choreographer creates a novel sense of mood and emotional tone without abandoning the traditional aesthetic inherent in pentatonic instruments. The instrumentation includes the mandolin, violin, clarinet, tuba, *kempul*, *kendang* percussion, *gambang*, *suling slendro*, *ceng-ceng*, and vocals. This acculturation of traditional and modern musical elements generates a more dramatic ambiance and introduces a sense of modernization to the musical landscape of the work.

Each instrument plays a distinct and important role in shaping the atmosphere and enhancing the audience's experience of the performance. The instruments are arranged with precision and clear definition to support the narrative arc of the choreography. The *kendang* and *kempul* serve as the primary regulators of tempo and rhythm. Meanwhile, the mandolin, violin, and clarinet provide melodic lines, harmonic layering, and textural depth to evoke mood and emotional resonance. Vocal elements add harmonic nuance and generate emotional conditions through their lyrics and melodies. Other instruments, such as the tuba, *gambang*, *suling slendro*, and *ceng-ceng*, function as complementary and reinforcing elements to heighten dramatic moments within the performance.

The use of diverse musical instruments aims to construct an auditory complexity that enhances the expressive range of the dance and enriches the audience's sensory experience. Overall, musical accompaniment in this work is not solely a background to the movement but functions as an emotional narrator and atmosphere-builder, effectively conveying the choreographic message and narrative to the audience.

Music is a critical element in a dance performance. It supports the construction of atmosphere and narrative impression desired by the choreographer. Music serves as a tempo guide and movement cue for the dancers. It enables the creation of dynamic variation

across scenes and acts as an expressive medium alongside the dancers' physical gestures. This is particularly evident in the use of vocal lyrics or instrumental choices that reflect the choreographer's intended message.

In *Body of Evolution*, the musical accompaniment consists of both internal and external musical elements. The internal music includes vocals or spoken dialogue performed by the dancers, as well as percussive sounds produced by the body (such as stomps or claps). The external music derives from instruments such as the mandolin, violin, clarinet, tuba, *kempul*, *kendang* percussion, *gambang*, *suling* *slendro* or *slompret*, *ceng-ceng*, and the vocals of traditional *sinden* and *gerong* singers.

4. CONCLUSION

The dance work *Body of Evolution* represents a new innovation that combines two artistic elements: traditional and modern. This fusion of artistic elements generates a novel atmosphere for the audience. The work originates from the choreographer's empirical experience with a background rooted in tradition, particularly as a practitioner of *jaranan* performance. The choreographer observes a phenomenon in *jaranan* involving a division of scenes *kiprahan*, *budhalan*, and *perangan*, which are analogized with the concept of human bodily evolution or changes in bodily characteristics across three stages: childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

The choreographer recognizes the uniqueness of these two concepts and perceives them as a unified, linear continuum. The creation process of this work is guided by Jacqueline Smith's structured and systematic Construction Method I, beginning from the initial stimulus phase through evaluation and refinement. The dramatic structure of this work refers to Smith's double-cone dramatic design to build a coherent narrative and evoke a dramatic atmosphere that aligns with the intended narrative and conceptual framework.

Exploratory and body-processing techniques are employed to generate movements that are both comfortable for the dancers to perform and tailored to their capabilities, allowing for the discovery of new movement forms. These techniques aim to create beauty, harmony, and coherence within the choreography. The selected style is derived from Mataraman dance traditions, which are then developed using modern artistic elements from contemporary dance, shaped through embodied explorations by the dancers. With 30 movement variations presented, the choreographer effectively conveys dramatic scenes and constructs sequences of meaningful movement that serve as a medium for communicating messages to the audience.

The content offered in *Body of Evolution* symbolizes a message to the broader public, that traditional art can be compelling when packaged and developed through innovation and new forms into a dance composition. This work presents three bodily characteristics depicted through scene divisions in *jaranan*. The choreographer seeks to embody these three distinct characteristics, resulting in three different bodily portrayals, each with its own emotional quality. By integrating visual, narrative, and artistic elements, this work serves not

only as entertainment but also as an inspiration to the audience to preserve the values embedded within traditional arts.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Both authors are involved in compiling this article so that there is a division of tasks that are arranged in order to be able to compile the article according to the discussion and needs that the author wants to convey. The two authors are divided into two tasks, namely Ari Chandra Pamungkas as a researcher and Dra. Jajuk Dwi Sasanadjati, M. Hum. as a research supervisor to compile the article.

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