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In the Hands of Other Practitioners

Purbo Asmoro’s innovative all-night *garapan* style, debuted over twenty-five years ago with *Kunthi’s Choice* in 1989, has had a profound influence on dhalang of his generation and younger in the greater Solo area. Whether performers try to imitate Purbo Asmoro somewhat faithfully, adopt parts of his style in combination with other influences, further develop his concepts toward a new result, or actively reject his methods, his presence as a creative entity in the Solonese *pedhalangan* world looms large. His style and approach have become widespread not only due to his popularity and the prevalence of his live performances, recordings, broadcasts, and tours, but also because of his influence as an instructor for over twenty-five years at ISI Surakarta. The question for this chapter is, to what extent is his system of all-night *garapan* taken on by other practitioners, and what are the alternatives in today’s Solonese wayang performance scene?
In the Context of Other High-Profile Dhalang

Purbo Asmoro competes for domestic engagements, international tours, recording opportunities, and a lasting mark on the field of *pedhalangan*, with a small group of similarly high-profile Solo-style performers. This community is his artistic world, and is certainly the primary model for aspiring, younger dhalang. In order to discuss the effect of Purbo Asmoro’s all-night *garapan* style among this community of high-profile performers over the past decade, I propose here a list of the ten most popular, respected, and highest-paid Solonese dhalang performing at the most attended and prestigious venues across Central and East Java and Jakarta, 2005–2015. I believe that this list would be generally uncontroversial in the wayang community (from oldest to youngest, year of birth in parentheses):

1. Anom Soeroto (1948)
2. Manteb Soedharsono (1948)
4. Warseno "Slenk" (1965)
5. Enthus Susmono (1966)
6. Anom Dwijokangko (1976)
7. Tantut Sutanto (1978)
8. Sigid Ariyanto (1979)

Only one of these dhalang, Anom Soeroto, typically still opens performances with a traditional court audience scene. The traditional *Kedhatonan* (In the Queen’s Quarters) scene is hardly ever used anymore by any of these performers. Virtually non-existent in current practice is the traditional, palace-style, *Gapuran* (Gateway Before the Queen’s Quarters) scene. While *Budhalan*, *Prang Gagal*, and *Cakilan* scenes are common, extended narrations of any kind are rare, as are full court audience scenes. The *Limbukan* and *Gara-gara* scenes are rare, as are full court audience scenes. The *Limbukan* and *Gara-gara*

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1 Seno Nugroho, a highly popular and innovative dhalang from Yogyakarta, might vie for Tantut Sutanto’s spot on the list but this study is limited to Solonese artists. From what I gather by listening to his recordings and speaking to colleagues, though, he is a proponent of all-night *garapan* style and actively studies works by Purbo Asmoro, combining that material with elements of Yogyanese performance style.
interludes, in all cases above, take up a combined two hours or more of the performance, and are inspired by the hura-hura movement of the 1990s. Harder to generalize in these performers’ styles is the gamelan accompaniment. In some cases it might be primarily classical in repertory, as is the case with Anom Soeroto. In some cases, although traditional, the gamelan accompaniment might be stripped down to mostly repetitions of ayak-srepeg-sampak with one or two ladrang or ketawang for a court audience or hermitage scenes, and a few lancaran, as in many of Manteb Soedharsono’s performances. In some cases, the gamelan accompaniment might be highly garaped for meaning, consciously mixing the traditional and the new, as is the case in Purbo Asmoro’s performances and many of Cahyo Kuntadi’s. In other cases, the accompaniment might be newly composed but more to create an effect, rather than forge deep dramatic connections. In still other cases the musical accompaniment will be made up of almost all new compositions and would be highly conceptualized toward meaning, as in many of Sigid Ariyanto’s performances.

What we are looking for, however, when trying to identify practitioners influenced by Purbo Asmoro’s all-night garapan style, is not simply the existence or absence of certain scenes or the insertion or rejection of new elements. Rather, we are looking for application of a system; an integrated approach. We are trying to identify performers who consistently apply pakeliran padat techniques, consciously reconceptualizing their performances across the six areas that have guided the analyses in Chapters 3–8 of this dissertation:

- plot details (garap lakon)
- character development (garap tokoh)
- scene structure (garap adegan)
- narration and dialogue (garap catur)
- movement techniques (garap sabet)
- musical accompaniment (garap iringan)

Practitioners of Purbo Asmoro’s all-night garapan style would also strive to create dramatic hierarchy throughout the seven-hour performance by applying these padat techniques for specific reasons: to support the energy of
the opening prologue, to underscore crucial subsequent moments in the plot or unraveling of the lakon’s message, to enrich poignant encounters between characters, and to delineate important points of structural division in the performance. The remaining parts of the lakon would, quite purposefully, have a more relaxed, traditional feel, with a number of stock visual and comedic attractions. If a dhalang shares Purbo Asmoro’s intent, he creates musical accompaniment that, rather than being like individual film scores for each lakon, eventually becomes a new system his musicians and singers can work within, requiring less and less rehearsal over time.

To take on this entire system and apply it consistently, lakon after lakon, performance after performance, is a tall order. It takes a great deal of experience with repertory, uniform talent across every performance element, time, the right musical personnel, leadership, desire to make a mark on the world of pedhalangan, unwavering self-confidence, supportive sponsors, and charisma. Hence, no one dhalang is following precisely in the footsteps of Purbo Asmoro, but there are a few who are presenting similar approaches.

The next section will briefly explore four dhalang who are known in the community as "all-night garapan" practitioners: Purbo Asmoro’s elder, Manteb Soedharsono, who came to espouse this style via a slightly different route; one contemporary of Purbo Asmoro’s, Enthus Susmono; and two former students, Sigid Ariyanto and Cahyo Kuntadi. This is followed by brief sketches of dhalang who take on some elements of garapan but not its entirety as a system, those who reject garapan elements entirely, and also the viewpoints of a few elder dhalang. The chapter ends with a look at how garapan is being taught at ISI Surakarta.
The legendary Manteb Soedharsono is, without a doubt, a record-breaker in the wayang world (see Figure 9-1). He was the first dhalang from outside of the ASKI world to study *padat* performance techniques directly under Gendhon Humardani and his apprentices, and the only non-academic dhalang to ever win a province-wide competition in *padat* performance style. He, along with Nartosabdo and Anom Soeroto, were the first to embody the now relatively common pan-Java superstar-dhalang phenomenon, as opposed to the more traditional local dhalang model. For years his fame resulted in 20 or more performances in a month, combined with grueling travel times in between engagements across Java and even to outer islands:

In 1992, I performed every single night for a six-month period, with only one night off every 35 days, and that was Tuesday-Legi [his Javanese birthday]. What is more, the distances between the performances were quite far, for example from Jember to Cilacap, and between cities with no airports [650 kilometers, and about 18 hours by car] (Soedharsono 2015, 7).
As an answer to the challenges of such a schedule, Manteb became the first dhalang to take on a team of script writers, gamelan music arrangers, and interpretation (sanggit) consultants, many of whom encouraged him to use elements of the garapan style in his performances. He holds the record for the shortest wayang performance ever: *The Death of Rahwana* (3 minutes, 2 seconds) in Paris, France, April 2004, when he accepted the UNESCO award on behalf of Indonesia. He also holds the record for the longest wayang performance ever: *The Baratayuda War* (24 hours, 28 minutes) in the courtyard of the Indonesian national radio station in Semarang in September 2004. Both of these records required a certain amount of garapan treatment, as such extremes in duration cannot fit within the traditional structure and content of scenes. Manteb is the only dhalang to have received the honorary title of “The Maestro,” by former President Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono in 2009. He received the prestigious Nikkei Asia Prize for his work in the arts in May 2010, and in July 2015 was officially denoted as an empu (master, elder practitioner and teacher) by the Pedalangan Department of ISI Solo, all awards that carried with them specific praise for his innovation.

Manteb Soedharsono is the only dhalang older than Purbo Asmoro, and one of the very few dhalang without a university degree of any age, who deliberately and routinely incorporates elements of garapan technique in his all-night performances, and defines himself as an all-night garapan practitioner:

Dhalang must be able to adapt their performances to the situation, context, times, and developments in their art. For example, the way I shape my performances has been accepted by today’s society because I use concepts in Western drama as they were reinterpreted by Gendhon Humardani in order to create pakeliran padat. Not meaning to sound arrogant, I am the only non-academic dhalang who understands these concepts and is willing to construct all-night performances using the concepts of pakeliran padat (Soedharsono 2015, 35).

Manteb Soedharsono thus defines himself as an all-night garapan practitioner, aligning with the concepts as they are represented by the ASKI think-tank of the 1970s and 1980s led by Humardani. He is enthusiastic and passionate
about this association. In my observation, however, Manteb Soedharsono chooses to focus most of his attention on reconceptualizing only two of the six areas: story details (garap lakon) and movement techniques (garap sabet). He focuses very little on the reconceptualization of character, narration, or musical accompaniment, and only in a limited way on changing up the scene structure.

Manteb is, without question, renowned for his work in garap sabet. Continuing in the vein of Bambang Suwarno in the area of expressive, "thematic" sabet, and yet far more virtuosic in his application, Manteb himself comments (Poerwono 2000, 54):

> The key to my entire approach to movement techniques lies in internalizing the personalities of each individual character, as well as the external situation arising from the contents of the story itself, which in turn affects the character and what he is experiencing internally in his soul. If we are dedicated to this approach and always keep it in our minds as we perform, it will allow us to discover new types of movements which will sometimes take the audience entirely by surprise.

Manteb can often be heard commenting in public forums as well as private settings, about searching for ways to create as much expression as possible through movement. He describes how dialogue sequences and even narration can often be discarded and represented instead by a single, economical movement or set of movements.

He can also often be heard talking about his sanggit garap lakon—his solutions for why something happened or someone decided what they did in a situation. Offstage, on stage during interludes, and in his writings, Manteb frequently concerns himself with the plotline and new interpretations. Before his performance of The Death of Kumbakarna in Jakarta, he took me aside and said: "I’ve rethought some of the details of this lakon. I have new ideas, new versions to show off tonight. Just wait. You’ll see."

Manteb brightens up and his eyes sparkle whenever engaged in a conversation about solutions to storylines. This passion for garap lakon seems

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2 Based on 42 live performances I attended in full, 2004–2015, another 10–12 recordings that I viewed via live-streaming broadcasts or on youtube, and three occasions I did simultaneous translation of Manteb Soedharsono’s performances for foreign audiences in Jakarta.
to me to be a part of his own natural character rather than his taking on "concepts of Western drama as they were reinterpreted by Gendhon Humardani." Sometimes I wonder if Manteb feels his interpretations will have more weight if cloaked under the term of all-night *garapan*, and at other times I wonder if he is "speaking the speak" of various ISI researchers who have supplied him with the vocabulary. I can easily imagine him sitting around debating story solutions animatedly 100 years ago, long before any discussions of *garap lakon* as one of six elements encased in a new style of performing.

In a limited sense, Manteb experiments with the recrafting of scene structure (*garap adegan*). He often opens with a brief prologue, but this is usually limited to one scene: either an aggressive, strong dance (*kiprah*) by the antagonist, or perhaps a meeting of Semar with a protagonist. One of his favorite techniques is the flashback. Related to his love of story-telling, he often delights his audiences by giving them an entire background tale acted out on the screen rather than in a narration. While Purbo Asmoro also chooses to act out tales on the screen rather than have them told in summary by a character or the dhalang, he prefers to place these stories as prologues or somehow reorganize his presentation so that the inserted story can occur in sequence and not as a flashback. Manteb Soedharsono waits for the background story to come up in the episode, and then with a dramatic flair utters the phrase, "And here is how it happened..." resulting in his fans erupting in spontaneous applause. These flashback sequences can last anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour or more, and can happen any time of the night. They have become a trademark of his style, and form the one example of *garap adegan* that he uses, but they are entirely predictable. They also, in my experience viewing, do not directly support major messages or in the lakon or develop characterization of main figures, but rather seem to be offered in the name of teaching the audience a rare storyline.

There is very little narration of any kind in Manteb Soedharsono’s performances, and only basic and direct dialogue with few debate sequences or special techniques, hence no *garap catur* to speak of. Characters are presented in alignment with traditional interpretations and I have not
observed any unusual representations of personalities. Unless there is a special performance in which Blacius Subono is called in to arrange the accompaniment, Manteb uses primarily basic accompaniment: ayak, srepeg, sampak, their sorrowful (tlutur) versions, and one or two ladrang and ketawang here and there. He has both rejected heavy, large, classical pieces and the more ASKI-based unusual accompaniment choices discussed in Chapter 5. In fact, this was the one area of his performance style heavily criticized in a public forum in August 2015. One of the court princes, Gusti Benawa (not a musician himself, but a fellow dhalang), complained, "I hear the same pieces over and over at your performances. This is an area that needs rejuvenation in your work."

While Purbo Asmoro is passionate about the entire system of garapan and has integrated it fully into his all-night performances, Manteb Soedharsono seems to only be interested in certain parts of the system and only for limited moments. His natural talents and enthusiasm for sabet and for story-telling shine through his performances and lend themselves to "town talk" around him about garapan, but perhaps these features are not so much reconceptualization of anything but rather simply his strong points as a performer. Especially when he adds a short prologue or a flashback to his performance, he appears to be a practitioner of all-night garapan. But his version of garapan is not a system like that of Purbo Asmoro’s. It is far less deeply embedded into the texture, hierarchical structure, focus, and feel of the performance from beginning to end.
No one can immerse themselves in the world of wayang kulit for long without hearing the name Enthus Susmono: a controversial, colorful leader of radical innovation in the performance world (see Figure 9-2). Since about 2000, he has been the third highest-paid dhalang in the world after Anom Soeroto and Manteb Soedharsono, with an active fan base in the thousands, similar to that

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3 This information comes from two anonymous organizers of prestigious wayang events in Jakarta and one in East Java, and is based on figures I have collected from them over a ten-year period. Most superstar dhalang, in particular Manteb Soedharsono, Enthus Susmono, and Purbo Asmoro (fourth highest-paid dhalang in the world), have a wide range of fees they will accept. Situations can range anywhere from donating their equipment and using their own funds to pay musicians while receiving nothing (rare), to accepting overhead costs, and musicians/singers’ fees but no dhalang fee, to agreeing to a reduced dhalang fee, to receiving official, full-fledged fees with little negotiation. The determination of “highest paid dhalang” order is based on the full-fledged fee asked by each performer, times an estimation of the frequency each dhalang receives this sort of fee per month.
of those twin legends. 4 Enthus Susmono and Purbo Asmoro are contemporaries (Enthus being four-and-a-half years younger than Purbo) and their paths to fame have been neck-and-neck since the mid-1990s when they were both high-profile performers in PANTAP events across Java. They are surely ranked 3 and 4 (in either order) among Central Javanese dhalang, 1995–2015, according to a combination of: grassroots popularity, salary, performance frequency at prestigious events, media coverage, attention garnered from researchers both domestically and overseas, fervor with which their recordings are sought after by both simple and knowledgeable fans, number of young dhalang fashioning themselves after their careers, and international fame. However, that is where easy comparisons end. Their current styles, their views on innovation, their relationship to the art of wayang, and the make-up and tastes of their fan base are all practically without overlap. 5

Theorists Supanggah, Sugeng Nugroho, and Murtiyoso have all made the distinction in their writings between innovation in wayang within a traditional framework and innovation in wayang outside of a traditional framework. Specifically when looking at how dhalang treat the lakon, and not the entertainment interludes, Sugeng Nugroho (2002, 80) places Purbo Asmoro as an innovator within the traditional framework of Central Javanese wayang, and Enthus Susmono as an innovator outside it. 6 Although Purbo Asmoro’s milestone invention of the all-night garapan style falls outside the traditional framework in many ways, for now we can look at Enthus Susmono’s influence through this dichotomy, as I briefly outline his background and a few of his innovations.

Enthus Susmono was born and raised in Dampyak, Kramat, Tegal, which is in Central Java, on the north coast and not far from Cirebon and the border with West Java. Most people I have met from Tegal, from taxicab

4 Based on counts of their respective fan-based social media sites, general observations of activity on these sites, as well as reports of audience numbers at their performances.

5 The information here is based on three live performances, as well as an additional eight all-night performance videos I have accessed online and through friends’ collections.

6 I specifically refer to Purbo Asmoro and Enthus Susmono’s “innovations” rather than simply their “work,” because there are plenty of areas and performance instances in which both of them fall within the traditional framework. What is being compared here is specifically the nature of their innovations. As for use of the term “traditional,” see Chapter 2.
drivers to musicians living in Jakarta, to Enthus Susmono himself, are quick and proud to distinguish themselves from the court culture of Solo or Yogyakarta within the first few minutes of meeting a foreigner. They will eagerly explain that people from this north coast region tend to be more straight-forward, openly brash and perhaps seem aggressive. They are not so interested in the complex rules of Solonese etiquette, have a more democratic and less feudal outlook on life, and a freer and more lively application of the Javanese language. In fact Enthus Susmono introduced himself in this vein the first time I met him, on the ISI campus in late 2006 after I had already gone on two international tours with Purbo Asmoro. At the time, I got the immediate impression that he was trying to both shock me and also pique my interest in something less "regal," "gentlemanly," or "refined," while somehow more "real," and "honest" than the wayang tradition I was involved with.

Enthus graduated from high school in Tegal and, although already apprenticing with his father to be a dhalang, did not go to Solo to attend SMKI or ASKI as was the dream of many aspiring dhalang of his day. During his vacations he would often travel to Solo, however, and was, it turned out, ultimately interested in what was going on with the padat movement at ASKI. From 1984–1988 (Purbo Asmoro’s last two years at ASKI and his first two years as a teaching assistant) Enthus would reportedly attend rehearsals at ASKI, and spend time talking with the pedhalangan students and instructors as much as he could. His father’s goal for him, however, was to have a strong Islamic scholarly training, and to never become an instrument of the government like many dhalang did at the time.

From 1984 to 1990, Enthus studied informally from both Manteb Soedharsono and Bambang Suwarno within the ASKI setting, and by attending performances around town. He cites these two as his biggest influences from the world of Solonese pedhalangan, aside from listening to Anom Soeroto recordings in his youth. He was particularly interested in Bambang Suwarno’s work as a wayang-figure artisan, and his creation of new types of kayon. After six years involved with ASKI and Solo, however, Enthus
decided he needed to develop his own identity, as a new talent from the pantura (north-central coast) region, an identity also referred to as pesisiran.7

From 1990 to 1992 he branched out into other styles and studied Cirebonese wayang kulit purwa and wayang golèk, with Bahani, Basari, and Suteja, as well as Sundanese wayang golèk with the legendary Asep Sunandar Soenaryo. He was also, at the same time, studying Islamic writings and teachings, and had a spiritual leader, Sukiman Tamid, who was influential in his life. From 1994 to 1998, Enthus Susmono became a national name due to his involvement in PANTAP events, which were routinely broadcast on national radio and TV stations throughout Indonesia. Although in 1994 he was not as established an upcoming force in the pedhalangan world as Purbo Asmoro and not nearly as popular, six years later, by 2000, he was rising up to a similar status and fame.8

In 2000, Enthus the innovator emerged on the scene, around the same time that Purbo Asmoro was consistently exploring and developing his all-night garapan style. In my limited exposure to him, I have garnered three major impressions: (1) reaching out, popularizing, and making wayang attractive to both young people and the masses is of primary importance to Enthus;9 (2) He considers himself both a political and religious activist, propagating democracy, anti-feudalism, and moderate Islamic thinking through wayang; (3) The persona of a charismatic and idolized star, who arrives with flair and an entourage of assistants, media, and fans around him, is a conscious part of the equation. When these goals are combined with his self-proclaimed background as a pesisiran north-coaster from Tegal complete with rough edges, the result is a sensationalist, populist, dhalang-centric spectacle combining art, political commentary, religion, and societal

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7 Pesisir, meaning coastal area, outback, far outreaches or edges, is most often used to refer to the north coast. Pantura is a contraction of pantai utara, or north coast. Both have the connotation in the arts of not identifying with the Central Javanese court cultures of Solo and Yogy and projecting their own more rustic, coastal flavor.
8 These three paragraphs of background biographical information come from Sugeng Nugroho’s 1992 master’s thesis on Enthus Susmono.
criticism. I also imagine that Enthus Susmono himself would heartily approve of this characterization.

By examining each performance element (from my personal observation of recordings and attendance at his performances), we can see that Enthus's aesthetic and approach is quite different from Purbo Asmoro's, or anyone else addressed in this chapter. We can also see how his innovations are often said to fall outside of a traditional framework.

Narration:
Enthus stays away from archaic (Kawi) and elevated (krama inggil) Javanese and usually goes so far as to avoid the most typical and well-known phrases from basa pedhalangan: the unique ways characters address each other, as well as specific metaphors, figures of speech, and stock phrases used only in wayang. He uses a mix of everyday Javanese, Indonesian, even frequent Arabic stock phrases, and employs very few or no extended narrations in Javanese. He is famous for juxtaposing both familiar Arabic formulas laced with religious connotations and vulgar, highly pornographic sequences in the same scene.

Scene Structure:
Enthus does not concern himself with a prescribed sequence of scenes, and although some of his scenes may resemble traditional scene structure this appears rare. There is a sense in his performances that he is telling the story in whatever way he happens to choose, without specific reference to traditional structures.

Musical Accompaniment:
Enthus's performances use very few traditional Solonese or Nartosabdo-style pieces. He most often seems to employ his staff members to compose scores, combining new compositions, vocal choruses in Arabic, and standard wayang repertory from the north-coastal or Cirebon region. The accompaniment is not crafted to form any sort of dramatic hierarchy, or to contrast with a traditional repertory in any way, but just stands alone as something new. He employs
Western instruments and Sundanese instruments within the lakon section of the performance.

Movement Techniques
Enthus Susmono has clearly been inspired by the dramatic and expressive movement techniques coming out of ASKI during padat exploration, as well as the ideas about new wayang design from Bambang Suwarno. He has also developed his own sensationalist elements of wayang-figure manipulation, which have caught on among a certain sector of younger dhalang. He often interacts with wayang figures during the performance, punching them with his fist during a fight scene, pointing at them, or even standing up to confront them. It is not unusual for him to turn around or stand up, face the audience, and engage the audience in a dialogue about what is happening on the screen. He has been known to shake the cloth screen in fury, and rip it during dramatic interchanges (Nugroho 2012, 128).

New Stage, New Figures, New Forms

Figure 9-3: An oval screen designed by Enthus Susmono, now being used by a number of younger dhalang.
Within the past five years, Enthus has designed a new oval shape for his wayang stage (see Figure 9-3). He often uses this new stage, especially at the most prestigious of events, and a number of young dhalang are imitating him. His performances usually feature colored lights, dry ice, colored smoke, and sound effects. He has designed a number of wayang-figure collections that are unique. While many dhalang, Purbo Asmoro included, have commissioned political and pop figures for use in the entertainment interludes, Enthus Susmono’s new figures become part of the lakon. Among these new figures are:

- *wayang planet:* extraterrestrial figures from science fiction movies
- *wayang sètan:* special spirit figures
- *wayang teletubbies:* cartoon figures from television
- super heros like Batman, Superman, and Spiderman, used in the lakon
- political figures like George Bush, Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein
- his 2002 invention of “Wayang Rai Wong” or wayang with realistic human faces
- his 2010 invention of “Wayang Santri,” an entirely new form in which stories are told from everyday Islamic life in a typical neighborhood

**Lakon Interpretation**

According to Sugeng Nugroho, who followed Enthus Susmono across one year of his performances and witnessed thirteen different lakon, Enthus’s lakon interpretation focuses around how to connect the story to something in current politics. The connections are presented directly, without any vagueness or subtlety. The main point of the performance, according to Sugeng Nugroho, is for the audience to make the connection to current events, for example (Nugroho 2002, 149):

1. *Garèng Becomes King* (wishing for a democratic leader of the people)
2. *The Birth of Gathutkaca* (hopes for the character of future leaders)
3. *Wisanggeni’s Struggle* (the role of students can play in reformation of the country)
4. *Gathutkaca’s Struggle* (being critical of the opposition and not giving up)
5. *The Sage Dawala* (the nature of a spiritual leader today)
6. *King Baka* (former president Soeharto’s corrupt policies)
7. *Kresna Awakened* (campaign politics, and promises that are never kept)
8. *Rajamala* (corruption and nepotism)
9. *The Death of Kumbakarna* (leaders who only think of themselves)
Enthus Susmono became the District Regional Head of Tegal in 2013, and has used his position to try to encourage government parties to support wayang consistently. He gave an inspiring speech at the closing ceremony of International Wayang Day at ISI Solo, on 8 November 2015. He praised ISI Solo for their history and their potential for the future. He complimented Purbo Asmoro specifically as a dear colleague and contemporary, and made a number of appeals for international support of wayang. To end this section on a controversial figure that I do not know well, I offer two quotations:

**Purbo Asmoro:**
Enthus is a genius. He is incredibly, incredibly smart. That guy is talented. Have you ever seen him perform when he is being completely serious and mostly classical? Amazing. So good. So dramatic, so powerful. When he is approaching it with a certain seriousness. But when it's all sensation and colored lights and smoke, well that's another story. It's all a question of what direction he wants to go and what is his motive. We will see. But he is a genius, no question about that (interview, May 2014).

**Sugeng Nugroho (Enthus Susmono’s primary researcher to date):**
Enthus Susmono is known in the wayang performance community as a young, extremely controversial dhalang.... Although he is from the northern coast outskirts, his style is some 70% from Surakarta, while 30% comes from other styles such as wayang kulit purwa from Yogyakarta, Cirebon, and Banyumas as well as wayang golèk from Tegal and Sunda. While his style may be framed within the style of Surakarta, certain dominant qualities in his performances, such as a pulsating vigor, high energy, raucousness, boisterousness, liveliness, and intimacy with the audience, come from his northern coast outskirts background. Looked at in their entirety as a package, Enthus Susmono’s performances fulfill the criteria of what one would call kitsch performance art—kitsch elements of the grand and spectacular variety. While recognizing that there are both exceptional and less exceptional qualities to Enthus Susmono’s work, there is no doubt he has succeeded in creating a performance format that is causing a sensation, and that is worthy of going down in history as [an important] development in Javanese pedhalangan (Nugroho 2002, 361–363).

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10 The 1985 PhD thesis by Lindsay "Klasik, Kitsch, or Contemporary: A Study of the Javanese Performing Arts" has been influential in the ISI Solo Pedalangan community. Nugroho uses this term surely as a result of being familiar with her work.
Sigid Ariyanto
born 8 June 1979 in Blora, northern coast region of Central Java
father: Bp. Djarijanto, Solo-style dhalang, mother: a pesindhèn
currently resides in Rembang, also in the northern coast region of Central Java

Sigid Ariyanto, 18 years younger than Purbo Asmoro, his teacher from ISI Pedalangan, is one of the most active dhalang on the current scene (see Figure 9-4). From Rembang, on the north coast of Central Java, he rarely has a month with more than three nights off. Most of his performances are centered around the coastal areas: pesisir/pantura.\(^{11}\) Sigid Ariyanto does, however, perform often in Jakarta, and occasionally in the Solo area and East Java.

I am not as familiar with his style when performing in the Rembang area, but when performing for the artist communities of Jakarta and Solo, Sigid Ariyanto consistently designs deep, thoughtful, and highly garaped all-night performances. In the eight performances I have seen, five of which I was simultaneously translating,\(^{12}\) Sigid Ariyanto has proven himself to be not only well-versed and fully capable in the all-night garapan style, but also a true innovator, creatively pushing the style to further limits.

\(^{11}\) The area Sigid is from, closer to Semarang and not near the border with West Java, is not considered as rough as Enthus Susmono’s Tegal. But it is equally marginalized by many Solonese artists.

\(^{12}\) I specifically mention occasions for which I did simultaneous translation, because during these events I am present and working parallel with the dhalang in a way unlike any other. While throughout this dissertation I only use as data performances that I have attended all-night, sat right up near the wayang screen, and for which I remained completely alert and focused, during the performances in which I was translating there was a further heightened awareness of every moment and every expression uttered by the dhalang.
As Sigid explained in a discussion panel at Balai Soedjatmoko in 2013, he believes that dhalang today need to employ a team made up of a script writer, music arranger, special-effects technician (smoke, colored lights, sound effects), and a manager, in order to be successful.

The first example from the past was Pak Blacios Subono arranging accompaniment for Ki Manteb Soedharsono, then it was Mas Dedek doing arrangements for Ki Enthus Susmono. Now I myself have Mas Setyaji. Dhalang [performing in garapan style] cannot go it alone. It used to be that the famed dhalang ego, the dhalang’s sense of individualism, could not be challenged. But we need to work in teams now. And we cannot make do without rehearsals.

Hence when Sigid Ariyanto is planning a performance for the artist community in either Solo or Jakarta with prestigious sponsorship, he delegates the gamelan accompaniment to Setyaji, an up-and-coming young composer from ISI Solo, or to Dedek Wahyudi. He knows that the narration will be garaped as he employs a script writer (whom he did not name in any interviews), and he meets with respected teachers and wayang critics to consciously engage in discussion on the reconceptualization of story details, scene structure, and character. Sigid Ariyanto has a special eye for dramatic visual presentation, and is a virtuoso with movement techniques, so garapsabet is also a given. Once he has a “packet,” such as his arrangement of The Life Story of Karna (from narration to movement to music and story details), my impression is that he repeats the performance in much the same presentation for different venues, only occasionally revising and changing parts.

Although Sigid is successful with each garapan element, he does not yet approach the whole as a system within which to work spontaneously, as Purbo Asmoro aspires to, but rather ends up with a packet of through-composed music, fixed narration, and scenes which are set, which he then repeats for similar engagements. It may be too early to tell, however, whether he will become more spontaneous, since Sigid is much younger than Purbo Asmoro. Purbo Asmoro also shifted in his career from more packet-like performances to more improvisation within a new system. What is certain,
however, is that Sigid is attracted to the teamwork set-up and to dedicated rehearsals to get a performance as polished as possible—two concepts that never resonated with Purbo Asmoro, even from early in his career.

Due to the influence of both Setyaji and Dedek Wahyudi, the gamelan accompaniment for Sigid Ariyanto’s performances tends to be both prominent and highly avant-garde. Almost every moment is accompanied by something new and startling to most ears, and often this causes a dissonance between elements of the performance. Traditional figures on the screen, engaged in relatively traditional dialogue, discussing a relatively traditional problem, might be accompanied by a new composition using saxophone, cymbal, and diatonic scale patterns with wailing extended male-female choruses using only the syllable “o”. This is one of the main criticisms heard about Sigid’s performances: that the music, rather than being one of six main elements to support the hierarchy of the drama (a major point in Purbo Asmoro’s development of garapan) stands out like a concert of new compositions. Sigid Ariyanto described his style strategy in the same 2013 Balai Soedjatmoko seminar:

In Rembang, a dhalang has to compete with the drama of the popular kethoprak tradition, in which the antagonists and protagonists and the intense exchanges are unparalleled. But they also have to compare with the liveliness of tayuban and dhangdhut, also so popular in that area.... I thought to myself, "Ki Enthus's energy is fascinating when he performs but his language and his content—well there are those who like it and those who don’t. Ki Purbo's language and content are wonderful, but his energy may be not be boisterous enough for Rembang.” So I had this vision to combine the energy of Ki Enthus with the contents of Ki Purbo, in order to present wayang that was profound but lively at the same time. That is my model—a combination of Ki Enthus Susmono and Ki Purbo Asmoro. What about Ki Anom Soeroto? He doesn’t even come into it. Wouldn’t be popular [in Rembang]. In the old days, everything was centered around Ki Manteb Soedharsono’s style, by bringing out a foreign antagonist and having him do one kiprah dance, and calling it a prologue. Well, not anymore. Not anymore.
Purbo Asmoro commented on Sigid Ariyanto's career in a casual conversation in Kemang, Jakarta in October 2015:

Sigid would take over the *pedhalangan* world entirely and shake up the whole scene, if he would only move to Solo. I've told him this over and over. Oh, you can bet he would be a hot point at the center of the new scene. But he insists on staying up in Rembang, and this highly limits the scope of his connections and sponsors. No matter what the distance from their domicile, people are used to the idea: "Let's go to Solo to find Pak Dhalang." But by living in Rembang, Sigid loses a certain charisma and authority, as well as the interactions that happen everyday within the community and help make someone into a name. If I had stayed in the Pacitan area the same thing would have happened to me. Sure, he's popular and performs every night in the Rembang area, but he's destined to be just busy and no more. If he moved to Solo he would be historic. He's extremely talented. I don't happen to care for his *iringan* when it is through-composed for a lakon, and uses all new compositions, but that's me. Doesn't change the fact that he would be historic.
Cahyo Kuntadi, also known fondly to his friends as Yoyok, grew up under the powerful influence of his renowned dhalang father, Sukron Suwondo, in Blitar, East Java. Sukron Suwondo, in an era dominated by traditional performance practice, developed a unique style of his own that incorporated wayang orang and kethoprak dramatic structures, exchanges, and musical selections into wayang kulit.

Aside from the influence of his father, Cahyo Kuntadi was also inspired early on by two performances of Manteb Soedharsono. He distinctively remembers Manteb’s *Rama Tambak* (*Rama Bridges the Waters*) that was broadcast live on television when he was eight years old, and a wayang performance of *Bima Suci* (*Bima As Sage*) in Blitar by Manteb when he was nine years old. He attributes his desire to become a dhalang the inspiration he garnered from these two performances.

Cahyo Kuntadi graduated from the Karawitan Department of SMKI Solo, and then the Pedalangan Department of ISI Solo. In an interview at his home in March 2014, he described his first introduction to the work of Purbo Asmoro:
I had never seen Pak Purbo perform until my first semester at ISI. My first reaction was that his way of manipulating the wayang figures was exactly like Pak Manteb! But this was a naive first reaction and once I had studied garapan and concepts at ISI I realized what Pak Purbo was really all about. And then his influence took on a bigger part of who I was. Once I had gone through ISI, I tried to take my dramatic techniques, philosophical content, and iringan ideas from Pak Purbo, my movement techniques and some of my lakon details from Pak Manteb, and then the rest was still from my father: my comic relief routines, social and religious commentary, and my understanding of the whole vitality a village performance has to have. In there I was also exposed to recordings of the late Pak Gandadarman and really his style has become my favorite. You know, Pak Manteb and Pak Purbo take a lot from him.

Much of the time that Cahyo Kuntadi was at both SMKI and ISI, his current wife, Suksesi Rahayu of Tulungagung, East Java, was the star pesindhèn performing with Purbo Asmoro. Years later when they married, the influence of Purbo Asmoro’s all-night garapan style on Cahyo Kuntadi became even more evident. It seems probable that this was due to his access to notation and texts used by Purbo Asmoro, as well as a wealth of recordings. At any rate, from about 2009 on Cahyo Kuntadi’s performances seem to be modeled largely on Purbo Asmoro’s interpretations, with the exception of movement techniques, which, as mentioned, were modeled after Manteb Soedharsono.

When Cahyo Kuntadi performs, we can recognize large portions of the performance as Purbo Asmoro-inspired. This is of course, historically, the method of transmission in pedhalangan: imitation and then a slow release of that imitation into one’s own creativity. The future will tell to what extent Cahyo Kuntadi develops more of his own style, makes further innovations to Purbo Asmoro’s garapan, decides to reject garapan in favor of more classical treatment, decides to use more of his father’s material, or, perhaps, develops a unique hybrid of many options.

Cahyo Kuntadi and Sigid Ariyanto, in many ways, appear poised to be the Anom Soeroto and Manteb Soedharsono of the next generation. Each generation recently seems to have produced two history-making superstars: Ki Anom and Ki Manteb, Ki Purbo and Ki Enthus, and now, perhaps, Ki Sigid

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13 I have attended seven performances by Cahyo Kuntadi, and, additionally, have done simultaneous translation for him on four occasions, for a total of 11 performances.
Ariyanto and Ki Cahyo Kuntadi. While there are many talented and popular dhalang their age, these two men, who are good friends, are often referred to in the same breath (see Figure 9-7). Cahyo Kuntadi is a more gentle force in the pedhalangan world than Sigid Ariyanto, not as brashly innovative, but more focused on carrying on the respected traditions of his father, Manteb Soedharsono, and Purbo Asmoro. Purbo Asmoro commented on Cahyo Kuntadi’s future in the same conversation of October 2015 in Kemang:

Ah, now here’s an example of what I was saying earlier. Once Yoyok moved to Solo [from Blitar] his prestige blossomed. He is now the new Solo talent. The new thoughtful, creative dhalang with integrity. Had he stayed in Blitar, or in Tulungagung [where his wife is from], he would have been no more than a locally-popular, educated talent. Maybe it could be said that Yoyok needs to find his jatidhiri [individual way] a bit, but he will. And we all start out by imitating others. This is eventually what leads us to our own styles. He's very talented, and will find his way.

Figure 9-7: Cahyo Kuntadi (left) and Sigid Ariyanto (right) after the dhalang competition at Monas Monument Park in Jakarta, September 2013, in which Sigid Ariyanto won first place and Cahyo Kuntadi second.
Of the ten performers listed at the beginning of this chapter, only one is a professed classicist, Anom Soeroto, and he will be addressed in the next section. The remaining four: Warseno "Slenk," Anom Dwidjokangko, Tantut Sutanto, and Bayu Aji Pamungkas, with the addition of a personal favorite, Jungkung Darmoyo, are each given a short sketch here. None of these five are classicists, yet none of them profess to attempt all-night garapan.

Warseno "Slenk":

Essayist Umar Kayam (2001), in describing the wayang scene from 1993 to 1995 in Central Java, repeatedly mentions only three stand-out stars after Anom Soeroto and Manteb Soedharsono: Djoko Hadiwidjoyo (born 1948 in Yogyakarta but residing in Semarang), known as "Crazy" Djoko, Warseno "Slenk" (born 1965 in Klaten) and Purbo Asmoro. Twenty years later, it is clearly Purbo Asmoro who has risen to the top. He is also the only one of the three who has been profoundly innovative in the way he treats lakon. Crazy Djoko and Warseno Slenk caused a sensation in the 1990s with the way they revolutionized the entertainment interludes. By the year 2000, however, Crazy Djoko was mostly performing in the Semarang area and only occasionally in Jakarta. Since 2005, I have rarely heard anything about his career and have only had the opportunity to see him perform twice, translating for him once. I questioned a number of people about this, but no one seemed to be able to explain the fading of his popularity.

Warseno Slenk (see Figure 9-8), one of Anom Soeroto's younger brothers, \(^{14}\) remains extremely popular and most months has a full

\(^{14}\) The youngest brother in the family, Bagong Darmoyo, is also a respected practicing dhalang.
performance schedule. Kayam was not the only one to note the parallel nature of his rise to fame with Purbo Asmoro; Tomo Pandoyo (a Klaten-based classical dhalang) and Agus Birowo (a Wonogiri-based dhalang) note this as well. "For years we thought that Mas Warseno and Mas Purbo would be the next Pak Anom-Pak Manteb legends. But it turns out that Mas Purbo rose to an artistic level in the 1990s and 2000s that was impossible for Mas Warseno to keep up with. There's no comparison." (Interview with Tomo Pandoyo, September 2015.)

Many say that the reason Warseno Slenk has been able to keep up his popularity is due to his untiring people skills. An amicable and engaging man, and the owner of a successful local radio station, Warseno Slenk enjoys talking to people, visiting and calling officials, and networking both domestically and overseas. Suratno, a researcher at ISI Solo who comes from a renowned dhalang and musician family in Solo, also commented on the popularity of Warseno Slenk in his essay in *Puppet Theater in Contemporary Indonesia*:

He is the most visible and successful among the popular puppeteers of his generation when one looks at how well he sells, the number of spectators, and how much he is paid for each performance. This is even though other commercially successful puppeteers of his generation, such as Tomo Pandoyo, Warjito, Suryanto, Joko Wardono, Warsito, and Sri Susilo have superior abilities in the fields of language, literary abilities, dialogue, puppet manipulation, voice, and knowledge of etiquette (Mrázek/Suratno 2002, 153).

His performances often feature extended, newly written opening narrations, full of *basa pedhalangan* metaphors, mixed with Arabic, combined with phrases from *ruwatan* (cleansing ceremonies) and at the same time references to the sponsor, sometimes by name. These unusual narrations please and impress many from the start: the sponsor, the officials wishing to feel washed in the ritual of wayang, the fans overwhelmed by their idol’s power and abilities.

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15 One of Warseno’s fan groups from Sukoharjo gave him the nickname “Slenk,” in 1993, which is an acronym for: Saya Lebih Enak Nonton Kamu (I Enjoy Watching You More), due to his entertaining interludes and use of non-gamelan, rock music-like bands.
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Warseno generally uses script writers, in particular the late Sri Sadhono Amongrogo (Sri Dadi, 1952–2016) of Makam Haji, as Suratno describes:

When a sponsor asks Warseno to perform a story that Warseno has not mastered, Sri Sadhono functions as a source. He explains the plot of the story and the most important dialogues to Warseno, and if needed he writes out the most important passages. This is done by Sri Sadhono during the performances. For instance, while the dhalang performs the first scene, Sri Sadhono writes the dialogue for the second scene, and during the second scene the text composed by Sri Sadhono is read by Warseno.

Soon after the opening narration and some sort of brief court scene, most performances I have witnessed by Warseno Slenk descend into a Limbukan entertainment interlude of more than 90 minutes, with all the typical antics of the PANTAP era. The section between Limbukan and Gara-gara is filled with primarily battles, and then another 90-minute or more intermezzo. After Gara-gara there are perhaps 45 minutes to an hour more of lakon, mostly battles.

Anom Dwijokangko

Born in Blitar in 1976, "Kangko" is Cahyo Kuntadi’s older brother by five years, also a son of the creative and eclectic dhalang from Blitar, Sukron Suwondo. Of the ten dhalang on the list, he and Sigid Ariyanto are the most highly booked.

Kangko (see Figure 9-9) publishes his schedule once a month on Facebook and routinely has only one day open each month. While from Blitar, he lives in Solo, and his schedule takes him all over East Java, but also frequently

Figure 9-9: Anom Dwidjokangko, International Wayang Day, ISI Solo, 7 November 2015 (photo by Kartiko Nugroho).
around Central Java and Jakarta. Unlike his brother, who enjoys crafting all-night *garapan* performances and studying recordings and written sources, Kangko is really too busy and perhaps not inclined. He jokes in public about not being a deep dhalang, about enjoying long entertainment interludes, and about not taking himself or wayang too seriously, which all may be true. But in fact, he is currently probably the most purely virtuosic dhalang alive, which is an audience draw.

Kangko recently created a sensation at the International Wayang Day (8 November 2015 at ISI Solo), when he performed a *padat* version of *Gandamana Luweng* (*Gandamana Is Buried Alive*). At the moment Gandamana was most enraged at Sangkuni and started to tear his body apart, Kangko stood up and starting slamming the Sangkuni figure against the wayang screen, ripping the screen and breaking the wayang figure. He then threw the broken wayang off stage and stood yelling blasphemies into the pathway the figure took through the air. After a few minutes he motioned for his musicians to stop the piece they were playing in mid track, at which point he got off the stage and walked away. Some say he was literally overtaken by the enraged spirit of Gandamana, some say he was only being melodramatic for effect, and some say he had reached a new height of artistic development and courage, inspired by antics similar to those of Enthus Susmono.

**Tantut Sutanto**

Tantut Sutanto, born in 1978, is the son of the legendary pesindhèn from Ceper, Klaten, the late Tantinah, who sang with Nartosabdo. He has an outstanding voice, a strong family background in pedhalangan, and excellent technique across all elements: narration, movement, *iringan*, and drama. He consistently experiments with prologues and other limited *garapan* elements in his performances, but has yet to develop any sort of all-night *garapan* system for himself. He has the love and respect of a number of important sponsors in Jakarta and elsewhere, making him a growing star, but he is not one who feels a need to highly conceptualize his performances. While he is a graduate of SMKI, he never completed his studies at ISI due to his busy performance schedule.
Bayu Aji Pamungkas

The youngest child of Anom Soeroto, born in 1984, Bayu (see Figure 9-10) has been performing with his father since he was under 10 years old. He has at his disposal his father’s troupe of elderly and seasoned musicians, his own drummer who has memorized his moves since they were both 10 years old, beautiful equipment, all the recordings of Rebo Legèn from his father’s collection, and a solid sponsorship base. He rivals Kangko in his virtuosity, and has inherited his father's flawless voice. Bayu has yet to develop a special interpretive angle. He, like Tantut, often starts his performances with a prologue of some sort, but the reconceptualization tends to stop there. Like Tantut and Kangko, he is not performing in classical style, yet also not in all-night garapan style. These three artists are busy, talented, equipped with virtuosic hands and beautiful voices. They are highly popular, and already quite wealthy. Their performances are dominated by battle and entertainment scenes. Time will tell if they develop any qualities deeper or more innovative than this.

Jungkung Darmoyo

One artist I would like to make special mention of is the son of legendary dhalang Mujoko Joko Raharjo, Jungkung Darmoyo, born in 1964 (see Figure 9-11). Although not on the list of top ten high-profile dhalang, he has interesting and unique views on garapan and is one of my favorite performers. He is popular in the Boyolali and Klaten regencies, but not a pan-Java star. He is a contemporary of Purbo Asmoro’s, being three years his junior.

Jungkung’s father, the late Mujoko Joko Raharjo (1940–1992) of Gombang, Sawit, Boyolali, was considered by many to be the next Nartosabdo. When I arrived in Solo in late November 1991, he was the
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dhalang everyone was talking about for his dramatic and orative flair, his unique interpretative details in lakon, his rich musical repertory, and his talented musicians. Before I had a chance to gain exposure to his work though—in fact right after I had attended my first rehearsal at his house in preparation for a wayang—Mujoko's mark on the pedhalangan world tragically came to an end. In February 1992, he had a heart attack and died within the first few seconds of a performance in Tawangmangu. Jungkung Darmoyo, was attending ISI Yogyakarta in the Karawitan Department at the time, and for some time after his father's death was not particularly active as a performer. Around 2002, when he started to perform more, and especially since 2004 when I embarked my own study of lakon, basa pedhalangan, interpretation, and performance practice, I started to attend as many performances of his as possible. In total I have attended an average of about one of his wayang performances every few months for the past ten years, so some 60 or so in total. At first, my intent was to gain some access into the talented mind of the late Mujoko, since Jungkung frequently performs a number of lakon unique to his father, and uses his characteristic interpretative details. Physically he holds an uncanny resemblance to his father, his voice is almost indistinguishable from his father's during sulukan, and his dramatic power and strong, energetic characterizations are similar. However, I also became interested in Jungkung's outlook in relation to this study, because he considers himself a practitioner of a kind of new garapan, but with a result quite different from Purbo Asmoro's.

Jungkung's innovations are mostly in the area of musical accompaniment and the way scenes are set up. He does not, unlike Enthus
Susmono and Sigid Ariyanto and other highly experimental dhalang, use hired composers (such as Subono, Dedek Wahyudi, or Setyaji), script writers, or any other formal consultants. Jungkung himself is a composer, and I have attended performances of his in which he has written all the gamelan music except for the use of a few srepeg and sampak. Usually though, his own compositions and arrangements occur only in the first few hours of the wayang, and by Pathet Sanga and Pathet Manyura he has relaxed back in to traditional repertory.

A hallmark of Jungkung’s performances is the startling way the opening court audience scene is set up. His view is that, while he wants to remain loyal to the classical order of scenes and is not interested in prologues, he senses that “a wayang performance has to be engaging and exciting from the very opening these days, in order to keep the interest of the audience” (interview, January 2010). His solution, different from that of Purbo Asmoro, is to infuse the opening court scene itself with more visual attractions and grandeur. He often opens the performance with a court dancer (gléyongan), followed by a loud-style, processional gamelan piece to accompany the entrance of the king and court members, perhaps transitioning into a male-female chorus-style piece, but with no narration. After the piece ends, Jungkung presents an unusual arrangement for whatever sulukan he chooses to sing, in which the dhalang alternates his phrases with the vocal section (male and female), who sing their phrases in a rhythmic, metered style. This segues into a raucous West Javanese jaipongan drumming interlude, as entertainment for the king before he speaks. Jungkung then goes into a rather long (sometimes as long as ten minutes) set of introductions between characters. Although introductions are a traditional element of course, here they take the form of fast-paced arguments between the characters about the appropriateness of their respective choice of language and terms of address. Although the particular elements differ from performance to performance, Jungkung almost always opens his performances this way: court dancer + loud processional piece for entrance of the court (with no narration) + vocally and texturally varied sulukan with lively drumming entertainment at the end + arguments over the way characters greet each other.
This is only one example of a number of devices Jungkung has to, as he explains, "make the performance lively from the outset." In the gathering of dhalang organized by Lontar at the home of Supanggah in Benawa in 2008 (see Figure 4-7), Jungkung referred to this as *garapan*, speaking directly and animatedly to Purbo Asmoro:

We're speaking here today of *garapan*, well *garapan* according to whom? And I agree that the term *garapan* can be used in a specific sense as a term to refer to how we as modern-day dhalang reconceptualize our performances to match the needs of the time. But within that special definition, why limit the examples to your solution? Prologue, focus on a main character or theme, reworking of the order of traditional scenes, use of *padat* techniques. That's *garapan* according to Purbo Asmoro. There are other models for *garapan*.

Jungkung Darmoyo's "*garapan solutions*" in fact tend to extend the visual and musical elements, in order to enhance the grandeur of a scene, to make the scene more interesting, according to his aesthetic. He does not reject the extensive introductions, but rather places them in the context of entertaining arguments between characters, less than 15 minutes into the wayang performance. He is definitely an innovator within the traditional framework, but is making choices quite different from Purbo Asmoro's, with a quite different basis of thought.

**The Classicists**

"Surely there are dhalang out there still performing in classical style? Not just the elders, but middle and younger generation as well?"

This question was posed by a respected Western researcher at the Balai Soedjatmoko seminar, in May 2013. Of course there are still dhalang performing in traditional style, who are disinclined to explore all-night *garapan* techniques. However, as mentioned in Chapter 1 of this work, they are in the minority. In an average month, perhaps 90% of the dhalang in the greater Solo area would be integrating a significant number of elements of all-
night garapan style into their performance, even if not taking the style on whole-heartedly or perhaps defining it differently from Purbo Asmoro.

Anom Soeroto

Anom Soeroto (see Figure 9-12) was born in Klaten in the same year as Manteb Soedharsono, 1948. He still performs classically in that he almost always begins with the opening court audience scene, almost always follows a traditional sequence of scenes even if somewhat abbreviated, and always uses pieces from the traditional Solonese repertory for his accompaniment. He uses the classical narrations and tends to limit his characterizations and interpretative details in lakon to traditional representations. He does not use sabet tématic, but rather a traditional set of movement techniques, and he never uses colored lights or sound effects. He does at times combine lakon into multi-episode constructions, although not frequently. I translated for a performance of his in Jakarta in 2014 in which he combined Déwa Ruci and Bima Suci, much like many other dhalang do and, as mentioned in Chapter 8, early in his career he was a pioneer in combining lakon. Occasionally he will present an unusual opening, such as using a lively kiprah (masculine dance to special drumming) for Dasamuka’s entrance in The Death of Kumbakarna, rather than the sequence for a traditional opening court scene. But this sort of alternative opening is rare.

In principle, Anom Soeroto stays within conservative, palace-classical, refined performance practice to this day, but there are two exceptions which skew the overall traditional feel of his performances. One is the extended
entertainment interludes, *Limbukan* and *Gara-gara*. Anom Soeroto’s performances almost always feature multiple stand-up comedians, and each interlude will last well over 80 minutes, longer than the interludes in Purbo Asmoro’s performances. Second, Anom Soeroto almost always performs now in tandem with his son, Bayu Aji Pamungkas. Bayu performs the battle scenes and other demanding visual attractions such as the Troop Departure scene, such that Anom Soeroto and his son replace each other on the stage some five or six times throughout the wayang. Because of the length of the entertainment interludes, and the length of Bayu's virtuosic battle and other visually exciting scenes, Anom Soeroto has little room (about 90 minutes total) for development of material, philosophic interchanges, or interpretive detail. So, while classical in intent and basic format, the resulting performance is considerably altered. Classical in some senses yes, but as a compelling alternative to all-night *garapan*, I would say no. Many commentators I interviewed felt similarly about Anom Soeroto’s current presentation (but were unwilling to be quoted on the matter): that while still beautiful, grandiose, and full of the regal authority Anom has always had at the screen, the extended interludes and tandem play with Bayu Aji have reduced the interest and depth of Anom Soeroto's work.

**Tomo Pandoyo and Kasim Purwocarito**

Tomo Pandoyo, a well-respected and popular dhalang from Kebonarum, Klaten, who is two years older than Purbo Asmoro and performs entirely in classical style, said this about his choices (interview, September 2015):

> I imitated Bapa Anom for years and consider him my ultimate teacher. But I could never perform like him, with his regality and beautiful voice. I also studied informally from Pak Manteb’s performances, but how could I ever actually be like him? I don’t have the hands for it. I understand what Mas Purbo has developed as well with his style, but I could never do it. I don’t have the ability and it’s just not me. So that’s who I was for awhile: The Prince of Confusion [*Harya Bingung*]. Finally, I just decided to be who I am. You know, I’ve just been lucky actually. When I started performing, I was the only one in my generation out here. There were plenty of elderly Klaten dhalang, but I was really the one coming up. I got a lot of connections, I have my audience and sponsors that choose me mostly due to the local tradition. That’s what I am. Just a local, Klaten dhalang doing what I can. To me, the important thing is that a dhalang offers something
to his audience so that they go home richer in thought than they arrived. It doesn't matter what style you use to do this.

There is no doubt that Tomo Pandoyo was being overly humble, when in fact he has significant talent recognized by many, and boasts a regular schedule of some ten performances a month. He is interested in lakon interpretation, studying different versions of the same lakon, and taking on unusual, older lakon into his repertory. But he is not interested in altering or reconceptualizing the classical form. He does not feel it is necessary, and has not felt the pressure to do so in order to earn a good living. Kasim Kesdolamono (born 1963), the son of Klaten dhalang legend Kesdik Kesdolamono, expressed similar sentiments when interviewed in June 2013:

This is just what I do. This is my father's style. This is me. I'm just a Klaten dhalang. I'm just performing the way I know how to perform. I see what those others are doing—Mas Purbo, Pak Manteb, Dik Jungkung, Sigid, Yoyok—and it's something to be admired. But it's for them. Not for me.

Hali Jarwosularso

One practicing classical dhalang I spoke to, Hali Jarwosularso, born in 1948 in Solo, was outspoken in his dislike of and disagreement with all-night garapan style. For Hali, an instructor for some 30 years at PDMN and the head teacher there for many years, garapan elements fly in the face of tradition (interview, July 2005):

What's wrong with the classical ways? What does garapan add to the meaning of wayang? Where's the beauty of all the old scenes and all the old narrations? Where is the history and the ritual and the process of an entire lakon unfolding slowly? The artistry of the long gamelan pieces? If the audience can't take it then, well, let them go watch something else, but wayang has a tradition.
Two Elders' Opinions

Most of the elder dhalang I interviewed (or spoke with casually),\textsuperscript{16} such as Sutino Hardokocarito (b. 1932) of Eromoko, Wonogiri, and Gaib Widopandoyo (b. 1937) of Senden, Klaten, have been quite tolerant of dramatic innovations. Neither Sutino nor Gaib take issue with the various *padat* elements used within scenes of Purbo Asmoro’s all-night *garapan* style, or with his extended prologues, relatively shocking endings, or unusual transitions between scenes. Unlike the harsh response by some seniors during the ASKI *padat* exploration days, *garapan* elements now seem to have achieved a place of respect and there is an acknowledgement and acceptance that most dhalang are using them as part of the lakon treatment to one degree or another.\textsuperscript{17} Sutino told me, in an interview at his home in March 2014 the morning after a full *garapan* performance of *The Life Story of Anoman* by Purbo Asmoro near his home in Eromoko:

Wayang belongs to the younger generation of dhalang. I had my era and they have theirs. I knew my generation and they know theirs. Dik Purbo knows how to tell a tale. He knows how to mesmerize his audience. I couldn't keep my eye off the screen tonight! The important thing is to keep wayang going, keep it flourishing, and keep the audiences coming. But because you have something to say. If you don’t have anything to say, well that's another matter. Then what’s the point, as it's just ridiculous fooling around in that case. Wayang is not entertainment. Wayang is food for thought, through a medium of entertainment. There's a difference, you know.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{16}Unfortunately, there are not many elder dhalang remaining, especially ones who are still active enough to attend performances and who are willing to speak about new developments. Gaib Widopandoyo’s live performance of *Gathukaka On Trial* was translated into English by Gloria Poedjosoeinarmo (Lontar 1999), making his performance the only other Solo-style dhalang’s work published in its entirety in English. (*Tall Tree, Nest of the Wind* by Bernard Arps, however, is currently in press, which documents a 1987 performance by Anom Soeroto in Amsterdam of *Déwa Ruci*, with English translation and extensive annotation.)

\textsuperscript{17}Or, it could be that *garapan* elements slipped artfully and meaningfully into an all-night performance are received more positively by elder dhalang than the same treatment in *pakeliran padat*—this was not something I thought to explore in the interviews. The criticism of *padat* by elders from Chapter 3, are of course all refer to more frantically paced, shortened performances. Also, neither of these two dhalang still actively performs, and there is therefore no competitive element in their responses.

\textsuperscript{18}Sutino spent much of the performance either glued to the screen or appearing to exchange opinions with his cousin, Suyati, still a popular performer in the Eromoko area (see Figure 9-13). These are the two dhalang I played gender most frequently for, from 1991–1994, making this moment a kind of full circle for me.
Both Sutino (see Figure 9-13) and Gaib (see Figure 9-14), while accepting the idea of innovation in the lakon, did mention specifically, however, that they did not like non-traditional musical accompaniment during the story-telling portion of the performance.
Look, it doesn’t matter to me how a dhalang gets across what he is trying to say dramatically. As long as he has something to say! Prologues, new narrations, *padat* techniques—it’s all no problem to me. And I actually highly approve of the deletion of certain scenes like the meeting of the troops to review the problem again, or the female quarters scene. These are just redundant. I salute the move to skip over these in the name of dramatic motion and interest. And if dhalang don’t want to start with “dhen, dhen” [Ayak-ayak, sléndro manyura, signaling a traditional opening] followed by the long “swuh rep data pitana” narration I can understand their point. But the one thing I cannot take is the new compositional stuff used for accompaniment in the lakon. I don’t like all the pop stuff in the interludes either, but they are just interludes. I can use that time to get something to eat or drink or go to the bathroom and I won’t miss anything. But it is during the lakon part, when I would like to enjoy the story, that makes me want to leave when I hear the new compositional stuff. The rest of it though, and especially depending on the dhalang—and with Dik Purbo what is more—really does have a sense to it. I can accept it. We have to allow the youth to develop the art after all (Gaib Widopandoyo, at his home right before leaving for a Purbo Asmoro performance, October 2015, Klaten).

**Current Garapan Training at ISI**

Since the founding of the Pedalangan Department in 1974 under Gendhon Humardani, a trademark of a dhalang’s training at ASKI, particularly in the later semesters of the curriculum, has been the exploration of *pakeliran padat* techniques. While the first five semesters of Purbo Asmoro’s student days at ASKI were packed with exclusively classical training, semester six of his program focused on studying a number of *padat* scripts. In the last two of eight semesters, students worked on either creating a new script or performing one from an approved lists of choices. Extensive breakdown of the creative process of working within the principles of *garapan* was not addressed, however. Application of *padat* techniques to all-night performances was not a consideration. This changed in 2009, under the direction of Purbo Asmoro and Blacius Subono. The study of *garapan* techniques at ISI is now a five-semester process (63% of the four-year program) rather than a three-semester process, and includes two semesters of intense work focused specifically on actively creating *garapan*, rather than

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19 The curriculum at ISI is reviewed and revised every five years, according to Sugeng Nugroho and Purbo Asmoro. The deeper focus on *garapan* techniques was first formalized in the 2008 revision of the curriculum. For an outline of the 2013 Pedalangan ISI Surakarta Curriculum, see Appendix 5.
simply studying established padat scripts, or being asked to develop a script without specific training in techniques.

**Direct Instruction in Garapan Techniques**

Students at ISI since 2008, are first exposed to all-night garapan techniques in semester 4. Under the course title Praktek Gaya Pokok (Primary Style Practicum), a studio course that meets four times per week, students are required to master the all-night garapan script by Blacies Subono, Pandhu Banjut (Pandhu’s Life Taken By the Gods). Students do not create anything themselves in the studio class, but rather are asked to internalize the script and the new elements presented.

In 2008, Purbo Asmoro created a two-semester course in which students are taught how to construct garapan elements for themselves, whether they wish to apply these to padat or all-night performances. Called Garap Pakeliran I and II, the point of these two courses, at least as Purbo Asmoro envisions them, is to put the onus on the students themselves to create and conceptualize elements of performance practice rather than memorizing or imitating any existing script. The courses meet three times a week for two hours each session. The published course descriptions are:

**Garap Pakeliran I (semester 5)**

After finishing this course work, students will be able to demonstrate the various elements and implement the techniques specific to a contemporary-interpretive performance:

1. Demonstrate and implement a number of different types of garaped literary techniques.
2. Demonstrate and implement a varied vocabulary of garaped movement techniques that express character and theme, and that symbolize the inner workings of a character’s heart.

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20 Depending on how many Pedalangan students there are in a given year, there are usually two sections of each of these courses. In Semester 5/2015, Purbo Asmoro and Wardono instructed one section, while Bambang Suwarno and Kenik Asmarawati the other. According to Purbo Asmoro as well as his students, there was a significantly different focus in the section led by Bambang Suwarno. In that particular year, Bambang Suwarno spent most of his teaching time on unusual sulukan, and specific movement techniques the students were asked to memorize, while Purbo Asmoro focused on development of the skills required for writing poetic narrations.
3. Demonstrate and implement a number of different types of garaped musical accompaniment techniques.

**Garap Pakeliran II (semester 6)**

After finishing this course work, students will put together a lakon, of necessity in short duration,\(^{21}\) using contemporary-interpretive performance techniques learned. Students will:

1. Identify a theme and primary conflict for the lakon.
2. Plan the lakon’s path as a whole.
3. Write each scene to be presented and decide on interpretation of each character.
4. Create the narrations, movement techniques, and gamelan accompaniment score.

Hence, in the first semester students learn techniques in isolation using excerpts from a variety of lakon. In the second semester they focus on creating a lakon: from the theme and conflict, to interpretive details, scene structure, narrations, movement sequences, characterization details, and musical accompaniment.\(^{22}\)

Purbo Asmoro commented in an interview at his home in August, 2015:

> We of course do not have enough time for all of this. I have to keep in mind my own goal for the students, when making choices about how to use the limited number of sessions. What is important is for them to develop independence, confidence—and mostly criteria—for stepping out on their own to create something different from the rest. It does not matter in the end whether the students apply the techniques to condensed or all-night performances, but the crucial part is that the students create rather than memorizing an existing script. These are the tools they will need for all-night garapan performances or for their own padat scripts. And they were never explicitly taught before.

Given the limited time and vast scope of the material to cover, Purbo Asmoro centers his Garap Pakeliran I course around the examination of poetic

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\(^{21}\) The short duration is a practical matter, so that students can have time to be coached during class. Purbo Asmoro makes it clear to students how these elements could be used in all-night performances and that the techniques are the same, either way.

\(^{22}\) There is a third semester of this series, Garap Pakeliran III, which focuses on wayang sandosa and is taught by Blacius Subono.
narrations. He described the steps to me a number of times over the years, but was particularly detailed in an interview in May 2013:

First I present my theories on writing effective poetic narrations in garapan style, because this is a very different approach from the memorizing of traditional texts they have been doing for four semesters. I explain the technique of using the physical environment of the scene as a metaphor to reflect the psychological state of the character in question. There are many other narrative techniques—we could spend a year just on techniques of poetic narratives in garapan—but I start with this one. I explain the qualities that we are striving for: language that is to the point with no circular repetition, and language that is condensed yet packed with meaning; clear, and yet poetic.

The second step is to give them sample texts to read that use this technique: from Soemanto, from Sri Dadi [Sri Sadono mentioned in the section on Warseno Slenk], from wherever I can find them. I do not use my own texts very often, since I do not want my students to think that I am trying to use my power as their instructor to force them to imitate me. And they can find my texts in recordings all over the place if they wanted to anyway. We read the sample texts together in class, texts they might not otherwise be exposed to, and I point out various aspects.

Finally, I give the students each an assignment. I give them a physical environment, a character, and an emotional state, and have them write their own poetic narration for the scene. Sometimes they are working on a lakon in another class and I deliberately mold their assignment around that lakon if I can. Each student gets something different.

When they come back with their work, a week or so later, this is when the interesting part starts. We sit together, as a group, and I lead a critique of what they have done. First, we need to take out the phrases that use elevated Javanese. The students usually do not yet understand that although the language in a narration should be poetic, this does not mean that the dhalang speaks to his audience in elevated Javanese. He is a storyteller. The relationship is more intimate than that. We take out dipun-s, for example. And there are words like wus, only used in wayang, that are more intimate and less elevated than sampun ["already"). Bahasa pitutur [the language an adviser or teacher uses fondly with his disciples] is what we are looking for. Then we look for words that are repeated, and find ways to alter the vocabulary. We look for phrases not contributing to the emotional content of the scene and try to direct everything rather toward a representation of the character's current state of mind. We look for words that stick out, that don't seem right. Considering there are six to seven students in the class, getting to everyone's assignment takes time, but it is worthwhile.

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23 Over the years, I have often heard former Purbo Asmoro students beoman the fact that he never gave much of his own material to his students. It turns out, this is on purpose and meant for their own good.
Purbo Asmoro described, in the August 2015 interview, how he has the students practice their narrations once they are critiqued (see Figure 9-15), putting the scene together with movement techniques and *iringan* (see Figure 9-16).

It's when the students practice these narrations that I have the chance to present the expressive movement techniques. Sometimes I take a detour here and present a few of the standard, quintessential *padat* expressive movement sequences, such as Pak Bambang's transformation of Arjuna to Ciptaning, or Brataséna's interaction with Déwa Ruci, or Sukardi's opening presentation of the young Kunthi and Pandhu. This is also when I can give different *iringan* alternatives. Every time a student goes up to practice any scene in this process, I change the piece used. Really mostly to entertain the studio musicians more than anything else, and to prevent them from getting bored! This started, frankly, as a gesture to my studio musician friends, but it has turned out to be good for the students' repertory as well of course. By the time we get through all that, one semester is over. Yet there is so much more to get to: how to construct effective dialogue that is conflict-rich and to the point, how to construct an advice-giving segment from Semar or a god or Bisma, and much more. There is just not enough time. The second semester then focuses on theme, message, and character development, within a specific lakon that the students will work on and specialize in for the entire semester.
Purbo Asmoro’s writer’s-circle technique and focus on analyzing poetic narration down to the word level is a hallmark of his teaching style, and a characteristic of his input as an adviser and jury member. His passion for the process clearly surfaces when he describes this class. I wanted to see what his students’ perspectives were as well, however, and so I contacted some of them.

**Students’ Perspectives on Coursework with Purbo Asmoro**

In September 2015, I gathered together Purbo Asmoro’s current Garap Pakeliran I class, for interviews in a relaxed atmosphere at my simple weekend home in Soniten, Solo (see Figure 9-17). This gathering was well away from the ISI campus and without any ISI instructors present, in order to invite the greatest freedom of response. After 30 minutes of small talk, including the students being coaxed into joking around with my Javanese musician husband, Wakidi Dwidjomartono, to lighten the atmosphere (they all would have heard of him and one had studied under him at SMKI), we started the discussion.
All the students knew I was an avid supporter, frequent entertainment-interlude guest in, and researcher of Purbo Asmoro’s performances. All had heard about, and wanted the publication Purbo Asmoro and I had recently completed together. Although the students seemed shy and hesitant to get started that day in person, it turned out that all but one had been connected with me on social media sites for a number of years, and had routinely read and interacted with postings from my sites about wayang and Purbo Asmoro’s work in particular. Once the discussion got started, it was lively, full of laughter, and as candid as I could have imagined.

Four of the seven students in the course this particular year were sons and grandsons of dhalang in either Central or East Java, and one the son of a particularly well-known dhalang. Three of the students came to ISI as graduates of the High School of Gamelan Music (SMKI): two from the Pedalangan Department there, and one from the Karawitan Department. One

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24 All received one of the two Javanese volumes and one DVD set after the interview.
25 There are a number of factors that would cause stiffness and reserve in such a situation: my being so much older, my being Western and a woman, my being married to a respected Javanese elder musician, and the fact that they all knew me as a pedhalangan-event organizer. I am sure they all assumed that I would report what they said back to Purbo Asmoro, despite my promises of confidentiality. Hence, while I take their compliments here on his courses as candid, since they chose what they wanted to comment on, I take their lack of any criticism or complaints as, while very Javanese, also perhaps holding back.
student came from a farmer's family in South Sumatra, and two from middle-
class merchant families, one in Sragen and one in Jakarta. While the non-
SMKI graduates, particularly the three who do not come from *pedhalangan*
families, may have had quite a struggle in the first four semesters to master
material, the fact they had survived to semester 5 proved their drive. As the
student from Sumatra said:

I think the language and literature of *pedhalangan* is very special and I just
wanted to study it, kind of like you would study any literary tradition. I'm
not going to be a practicing dhalang and I know that. But I feel like I
might be able to expose the language and literature to students who know
nothing about it, in coursework at the high school or university level some
day.

The four from *pedhalangan* families, all practicing dhalang on some level or
another, were all highly motivated to study with the renowned Ki Purbo
Asmoro. It was clear from the interviews that the students appreciate his
teaching style.

**Student A:**
Pak Purbo is different from the other instructors. He is extremely patient
when working with students. I have so many deficiencies, but Pak Purbo
develops a confidence in us, no matter what our background, and this is
quite special and unique. We want to work hard for him. We end up
doing more than we thought we could.

**Student B:**
Pak Purbo's class has a different feel from other classes. He is incredibly
serious, but at the same time relaxed and jokes around with us. He
demands focus from us, but at the same time is close to us. We can be free
and we feel no reins on us as we experiment.

**Student C:**
Pak Purbo's class is much more about literary techniques than any other
class. He also emphasizes that we must come up with interpretive details
(*sanggit*) that are different from what has come before, that are creative
and innovative. He teaches about movement that represents emotion and
dialogue, and about the connection between movement and *iringan*—this
integration has to be perfect in his mind.

**Student D:**
He always understands our questions and takes them seriously. I asked
him once, "Pak, what elder dhalang portrayed Rama and Sinta in a truly
romantic and personal way? Is this something the older dhalang just did
not do, or what?" He took me so seriously, "Hem, who would that be... " he
pondered as he sat at the *gendér*. We were supposed to start class but he just kept his head down on the *gendér* and kept saying, "Who would that be...?" Much later, when we'd all gone on to something else, he was still thinking about it! Basically we are free to ask him about anything, anything at all.

**Student E:**
I value most the sessions when we bring back our attempts at narrations. He collects them and criticizes them. Wow. It's powerful. Sometimes he takes off so unpredictably and so suddenly at the end of a class. You turn around and he's just gone. In a flash. Sometimes he goes past the time, still talking about something he feels strongly about.

**Student C:**
I used a tiny snippet from a Pak Tristuti script in mine—remember, guys? [They all laugh.] Pak Purbo listened for a few seconds and then interrupted me, eyes closed, hand up like a stop signal, and said, "Go home and try again. Someone else wrote that one." He knew right away, after only about two sentences, that it was from Pak Tristuti. Amazing. Really amazing.

**Student B:**
The students are encouraged and required to be proactive in his class. We create. We cannot be passive, we cannot use something already existing, we cannot use Pak Purbo's material or anyone else's. And when he criticizes our scripts we learn so much. It's kind of overwhelming how much we get, really.

While taking Garap Pakeliran I and II, students are also enrolled in the eight-hour per week performance practicum course, Praktek Gaya Pokok. In semester 5 and 6 this studio course is also taught by Purbo Asmoro. Rather than centering around the creative process, students in this course are expected to master two famous scripts from the golden era of ASKI's *padat* exploration: *Alap-alapan Sukèsi* (1980) by Soemanto in semester 5 and *Kunthi Pilih* (1984) by Sukardi in semester 6. In addition, students in semesters 6 and 7 take a course called Penulisan Lakon (Lakon Writing), often taught by Sugeng Nugroho, which is a theory course analyzing the techniques used in various lakon scripts by various masters. Purbo Asmoro emphasizes that the Garap Pakeliran I and II courses are at the core of developing the students into performers:

No matter how many good examples they are given, if they are not guided through the process of trying it themselves, they will never be able to do it. Garap Pakeliran is not the study of performance. That would be
easy—all I would have to do is bring one of my own texts from home, show them what it looks like on the screen, and tell them to reproduce it. But if we do that, they will only be able to imitate, but not understand, the techniques involved. The course is the study of a creative process. A process of examining something in a new way and creating something new.

In addition to teaching Garap Pakeliran I and II and Praktek Gaya Pokok, Purbo Asmoro also serves as an adviser and coach to students in their final semesters as they are preparing performance exams, as well as a jury member for the exams of students he does not directly advise (see Figure 9-18).

![Figure 9-18: Purbo Asmoro, part of a jury during a performance exam at ISI Surakarta in 2009 (photo by Kartiko Nugroho.)](image)

While it may be an elevated, respected art form from our ancestors, full of high ideals and rich content, *pedhalangan* does not have to be interpreted as an artform that needs to look to the past. In fact what is far more crucial is looking at what an elevated and respected artform full of high ideals and rich content looks like when it adjusts to new developments of its era. This is what I tell my students. And more and more I find that this is why I teach (Purbo Asmoro, interview with a reporter, University of Mercu Buwana, Oct 2015, Jakarta).