

# Margaret Coldiron

## *SENDRATARI YUNANI*

### Negotiating the Languages of Intercultural Performance in an Indonesian-style Greek Tragedy

*Sendratari*, an acronym from *seni* (art), *drama*, and *tari* (dance), is a popular theatrical form which developed in the 1960s and 1970s at the Indonesian Arts Academies and on touristic stages in Yogyakarta and elsewhere in Java, Bali and other islands of Indonesia. It uses traditional stories and movement styles to create new, often very spectacular, dance dramas. In Indonesia, *sendratari* has been accused of presenting monolithic images in the service of the Indonesian state (Hough 1992). However, in intercultural productions staged outside of Indonesia, most notably in Robert Wilson's production of *I La Galigo*, the dramaturgy of *sendratari* has been employed to different purposes and effect (Cohen 2005).

Critics of interculturalism have argued that it is a form of cultural expropriation that mines raw theatrical materials from source cultures without benefits accruing to those who 'own' this culture (see especially Bharucha 1993). In his treatment of intercultural theatre, Patrice Pavis (1992: 1) tells us that

Never before has the western stage contemplated and manipulated the various cultures of the world to such a degree, but never before has it been at such a loss as to what to make of their inexhaustible babble, their explosive mix, the inextricable collage of their languages.

Pavis posits the 'hourglass' model for the analysis of intercultural performance in which a foreign 'source' culture flows through the narrow neck of adaptation into the 'target' culture (local, that is, Western European) producing the product we call 'Intercultural Theatre' (1992: 4–5). I find the model flawed for a number of reasons, most especially because it assumes that the flow is only one way, that the foreign culture must be the source and that the 'target' must be some sad, moribund aspect of our perpetually dying European theatrical culture.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Within the term 'European' I mean to include the post-colonial European cultures of North America and Australia, however unfair the terminology might seem.

I would like to suggest that intercultural theatre is much more complex and varied than this model will allow. Among its other weaknesses, the model assumes a stable and culturally homogeneous audience and performers who all belong to a shared culture – in the European realist tradition – which is indelibly inscribed upon their bodies and minds. Analytical constructs like this depend upon the object of analysis following a fixed pattern or set of rules, but intercultural theatre by its very nature disrupts patterns and breaks rules. That’s what makes these productions interesting, controversial and exciting. Audiences for intercultural theatre are not necessarily stable or homogeneous and those who perform in intercultural productions frequently are trained in techniques and traditions from a wide range of cultures, which may or may not include European realism.

The production discussed here looks at first glance as though it fits Pavis’ hour-glass model pretty well: a classical Greek play performed using *sendratari* dramaturgy and techniques from Bali and Java (hence the title *Sendratari Yunani*, Indonesian for ‘Greek Sendratari’). In this theatrical interaction the culture of Indonesia (source) did not simply flow into a western classic (target); instead the production became a dynamic, continually developing interaction among and between cultures. It is the multi-valent dynamism of intercultural collaboration that so troubled Pavis and his fellow semioticians and led to the development of the hourglass model, but his analytical premise cannot accommodate the complexity of intercultural production processes. In this paper I will give an ‘insider’s view’ of the way in which this particular production developed and how it worked in performance, with attention to the ways in which the myriad intersecting cultures involved interacted with one another. I will argue that the overmapping of *sendratari* on a western theatre text has the potential to disturb received production patterns in Europe, and allows a target culture to re-conceive its theatrical legacy.

## Background

This Greek *sendratari* was an adaptation of Euripides’ 5th-century (BCE) tragedy, *Hippolytos*, produced by Thiasos, a London-based theatre company specialising in productions of classical Greek plays. Thiasos aims to illuminate ritual elements of surviving Athenian playtexts, and convey their cultural differences from the naturalistic norms of the contemporary European stage. According to the company’s ‘manifesto’:

We are looking for ways to make ancient drama work on the modern stage, since most modern productions utterly fail to. Don’t expect us to be polite about what passes for tragedy on the British stage: we have sat through one too many grim, dreary, self-indulgent (and, yes, well-funded) productions, and our patience is at an end. It seems obvious to us that the conventions of the modern stage are hopelessly unsuited to ancient theatre, that naturalistic acting goes completely against the grain of the scripts, and that the chorus is there to sing and dance, not to chant and weep. It seems obvious to us that ancient drama gains nothing from having a spurious modern ‘relevance’ foisted onto it. It seems obvious to us that the most successful productions, those with a genuine power to move,

are the ones which are able to respect the essentially artificial, coded, nature of this extraordinary art form.

(Zarifi and Masters, n.d.)

In 1998, Thiasos began work on, *Hippolytos*, presenting its initial version at the Triennial Classics Conference held at Cambridge University. It was subsequently performed at the Interface Festival of Intercultural Theatre in London, the International Festival of Ancient Greek Theatre in Paphos, Cyprus in 2001 and, in 2004, at the Shaw Theatre in London and Dartmouth College in New Hampshire.

The central focus of Thiasos' work is the use of the chorus and its connection with ancient Greek ritual practices. However much Europe regards the theatre of classical Greece as its ancestor, Thiasos contends that ancient Greek drama is at least as foreign and remote as the performance traditions of India, China, Japan or Southeast Asia. Athenian tragedies as performance represent a kind of unknowable unknown. Information about performance practice can only be inferred from vase paintings and a few literary and historical documents. Still, there is abundant evidence that the choral odes were derived from hymns of communal worship and although neither the music nor the choreography survives, it is known that they were sung and danced and that rhythm and rhythmic complexity were important aesthetic and ritual concerns. The drive to find a theatrical language that can work with 'the essentially artificial, coded, nature of this extraordinary art form' is the company's justification for using techniques of Asian theatre in producing Greek plays.

Thiasos had already used Indian *bharatanatyam* as a basis for the chorus dances in their production of *Medea*. The choral dances in *Hippolytos* utilised *jaipongan*, a contemporary dance form originally from Sunda, West Java, which uses movements from the martial art *pencak silat* and various Sundanese dance traditions.<sup>2</sup> Since the plan was for the principals to emerge from the chorus, masks based on Balinese *topeng* character types were commissioned from a Balinese carver. I collaborated in this work and then worked with the actors creating scenarios utilising the traditional movement vocabulary appropriate to the iconography of the masks.

The impulse towards the theatrical languages of Asia in relation to Greek plays represents, in part, the search for a connection to a ritual past – a 'holy'<sup>3</sup> theatre, with meaning beyond the trivialities of personal human emotion that have become the focus of so much contemporary drama. Ancient Greek theatre, like much of Balinese dance-drama, was a communal activity of religious worship in a culture in which religion was a natural and inextricable part of daily life. The plays were not created as vignettes on individual human suffering but as offerings to the gods, which also served as an expression of the history and values of the community. Thus bringing together these two cultures (Greek and Balinese) was not a quest for

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<sup>2</sup>Artistic director Yana Zarifi had initially hoped to use Balinese female dance movements drawn from the vocabulary of the courtly Legong Kraton but these could not be adapted to the music and rhythms of the Greek text (personal communication).

<sup>3</sup>The term 'holy theatre' is a coinage of Peter Brook in his early collection of essays on the theatre titled *The empty space*, and refers to 'The Theatre of the Invisible – Made – Visible: the notion that the stage is a place where the invisible can appear' (1982: 42). It is a theatre which, Brook contends, has died in the West but is preserved in the East (1982: 45).

exoticism but instead was prompted by the recognition of certain commonalities between the two, especially in relation to performance as an aspect of religious ritual.

An adaptation of this kind is not without its problems, however. In the west the prevailing attitude regarding both Ancient Greek theatre and the performance traditions of Asia tends towards a kind of 'museum-isation' in which these performance genres must be fixed, stable and clearly definable. But living performance traditions, because they are living, are dynamic and subject to change. Scholarly tomes with gorgeous colour plates may set out rules and definitions for performance, but these are often contradicted by experience in the field, where practice may differ substantially in different places or times or with different performers. Greek tragedy varied with every Dionysiac festival and the choruses incorporated a melange of songs and dances from different genres.<sup>4</sup> Although *jaipongan* and *topeng* have definable 'languages' derived from tradition and practice, they also have strong improvisational elements. So, while certain aspects at each end of this intercultural fusion are fixed in some ways, they are also mutable – capable of evolution and change.

## The play

*Hippolytos* is a fitting text for intercultural production as in many ways it is a play about clashes of cultures – male vs. female; virginity vs. sexuality, indoors vs. outdoors, land vs. sea.<sup>5</sup> The eponymous hero-victim is the virtuous son of Theseus from his liaison with Hippolyta, the Amazon queen. Hippolytos has dedicated himself to Artemis, goddess of virginity and the hunt, and his open contempt for Aphrodite, goddess of sexual love, has earned her enmity. To exact her revenge she has infected Theseus' young wife Phaedra with an overwhelming passion for her stepson and the misery of this adulterous, incestuous and unwanted desire has made her mortally ill. Her old nurse, devastated at her mistress's declining state, pries the secret from her and persuades her that the situation can be resolved. When the nurse tells Hippolytos of Phaedra's love, he responds with horror in a speech famous for its shocking misogyny. Phaedra, devastated, commits suicide and to save her honour leaves a note implying that Hippolytos has raped her. Theseus (who has been off on yet another adventure) returns home to find his wife dead and the note incriminating his son. In spite of Hippolytos' plea of innocence, Theseus banishes him and calls upon his own father, the sea god Poseidon, to exact a terrible retribution. As Hippolytos drives his chariot along the shore, a monster rises out of the sea, terrifying his team of horses. They

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<sup>4</sup>The artistic director explained the rationale thus: 'The Greek choral odes sometimes display characteristics [phrases such as invocations, metre/rhythm, ritual formulae] of the genres of extra-dramatic choral lyric such as songs of lamentation, victory, procession, wedding songs, maiden songs, songs of blessing, and so on. The choral odes of tragedy are thus a synthesis, a melange, of songs from other genres. We do not know much about the dances in ancient Greece, but we assume there is a close relationship between rhythm and dance. *Jaipongan* is a melange of dancing styles and so I thought it would fit' (personal communication).

<sup>5</sup>I am obliged to Professor David Wiles and his admirable study *Greek theatre performance: An introduction* (2000) for some of this analysis.

bolt, wrecking the chariot and dismembering Hippolytos as they drag him over the rocks. A chorus of women comment upon the action and the play (in this production) ends with a hymn to Aphrodite.

## The production

From the start the production involved an elaborate mixture of cultural milieus. The choruses were sung in ancient Greek to music composed in contemporary style.<sup>6</sup> The choreographer, Untung Hidayat, a traditionally trained dancer from West Java, created *jaipongan* movement to illustrate the songs. Andy Channing, a London-based composer and gamelan musician, provided live musical accompaniment including a Balinese *kecak* chorus for the *topeng* scenes with the principals. The text of the play was abandoned altogether and replaced by narration in English that summarised the plot. Feeding no doubt off the many Indonesians and Indonesianists involved, the final product might be best described as a kind of small-scale *sendratari*. This is *sendratari* with a difference, however. Here the masks and the dances came from Indonesia but the story, the characters, the music, words and metre of the choral odes are fundamentally Greek. The costumes are a mix: the simple tunics which form the basis of the chorus costume are based on Greek models, but elements of Balinese and Javanese traditional dance costumes have been added. The narration is thoroughly English in tone, but the device is strikingly reminiscent of *sendratari* in Indonesia, where a combination of pantomime and narration often replace dialogue.

## The cast

Assembling performers for such a production is very difficult. A casting call for actor-singer-dancers, with training in Javanese or Balinese dance, mask work and ability in Classical or Modern Greek is likely to produce a rather narrow field of candidates. The first cast numbered nine and was all-female: two had studied Javanese dance and singing at the Academy of Indonesian Performing Arts in Solo, Central Java; there were dancers from Yugoslav Macedonia and South Africa; two English actresses, one with mask experience, the other with experience in musicals and fringe work; and a Portuguese raised in Canada who had performed in Ancient Greek at university. In its later manifestations, there were some cast changes, the most important of which placed the choreographer in the role of King Theseus. By its third incarnation (which travelled to Cyprus for the International Theatre Institute Festival of Ancient Greek Theatre), the chorus was reduced to six, including four of the original cast, plus a Brazilian who had studied *topeng* in Bali and an English actress with long experience in Javanese dance. The most recent 'revival' of the production in 2004 was again an all-female cast and featured the Balinese dancer and Arja performer, Ni Madé Puja-wati, in the role of the ill-fated Queen Phaedra. Gillian Roberts,<sup>7</sup> who had performed

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<sup>6</sup>The composer, Jamie Masters, is a classical scholar and musician.

<sup>7</sup>Gillian Roberts trained and worked professionally as an actress for many years before studying dance in Java starting in the early 1990s. She now performs and gives workshops in both Javanese

in the Cyprus cast, reconstructed the dances and played the role of Theseus. The rest of this fourth cast consisted of classically-trained British actresses who had experience with physical theatre and mask work and a London-based dancer, originally from the Bahamas, who had trained for many years in Balinese dance, as well as flamenco and other ethnic dance styles. These eclectic groups of performers, representing a wide range of cultures and experience, were certainly not hindered by 'European realist' bias. Each lent their experience and expertise to the development of the piece and had to adapt to the demands of unfamiliar language and movement.

Negotiating among the languages of a multi-cultural company in rehearsal is something that develops gradually as necessity demands. English was the common spoken language, but aspects of the work were occasionally negotiated in Portuguese, Indonesian, Serbo-Croat and Greek. In terms of languages of performance, there were interesting problems that arose for some performers whose specific skills were useful for some aspects of the production, but proved a hindrance in others. For example, those who had training in Central Javanese dance found themselves reasonably at home with the physical language of *jaipongan*, but found it difficult to adapt to the rather different requirements of Balinese *topeng* movement, which tends to be more dynamic and less refined than Javanese *topeng*. The European-trained performers occasionally found difficulties in focusing on purely physical and stylised representations of emotion, rather than conjuring a 'realistic' enactment of the character's 'inner state.'

Each time the play was re-cast new performance opportunities and challenges appeared. In the 2004 version of this production, the role of Phaedra was played by the Balinese dancer and *Arja* performer, Ni Madé Pujawati. Taking advantage of the special skills now available, Ni Madé was asked to improvise a *tembang*<sup>8</sup> (song) appropriate to the moment when Phaedra despairs of Hippolytos' love and takes the decision to end her life. This is the only instance in the production in which a mask character uttered a sound – all other mask scenes were enacted silently, without speech or song. This single occasion of the masks' utterance made the scene particularly powerful, highlighting the tragedy of Phaedra – an unwilling victim of Aphrodite's curse.

Gradually, the production (in each of its iterations) began to take on its own identity that was neither Greek nor Indonesian, but was about telling a story of the interaction of gods and human beings that seemed consistent with both cultures.

## The masks

The principal characters were played in Balinese masks designed according to established iconography of *topeng* character types. Theseus was patterned after the *Patih* – the powerful warrior/prime minister. The goddess Aphrodite, Queen Phaedra and

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and Balinese dance, and specialises in East Javanese dance. She trained extensively in West Javanese dance with the choreographer Hidayat in London before joining the third cast.

<sup>8</sup>*Tembang* is traditional melody used in Balinese dance drama – both in *arja* and, to a lesser extent, in *topeng*. A fairly simple melody is created around two or three notes and then elaborated by the singer through complex vocal improvisation.

the Nurse were modelled on the mask of *Putri*, the refined princess. Hippolytos had the mask of *Dalem*, the refined king, and the mask for the virgin goddess Artemis was based partly on the *Dalem* mask and partly on the mask of the sexually ambiguous *Telek*, a refined supernatural character.

The most problematic role was that of Phaedra's nurse and confidante, and it was with this role particularly that the mediation between cultures was most difficult. The first fundamental problem is that Greek tragedy (unlike Elizabethan or Jacobean tragedy, for example) is simply tragic. There are no comic interludes to lighten the dark path to doom on which the principal characters are embarked. Balinese traditional theatre, on the other hand, is completely different. However serious the issues of the play, however significant the ritual which it accompanies, there is always some comedy. In fact (and perhaps unsurprisingly) the comic sequences are often the most popular part of the performance and that through which moral lessons are often communicated most directly. When I explained the plot of *Hippolytos* to the Balinese mask-maker, Agung Ngurah, he was baffled by its unrelenting misery. Within a Balinese Hindu aesthetic, the European conception of stage tragedy is unthinkable because it lacks the essential element of balance between dark and light. Serious characters in Balinese dance-drama – like the princess and the refined king – are idealised, beautiful and perfect, not tragically flawed like Hippolytos and Phaedra. Furthermore, in Balinese *topeng* an older female character is inevitably comic. But of course, the nurse in *Hippolytos* is not really meant to be funny. Still, no matter how hard we tried, the mask always came out with a rather comic cast. In trying to find a model for this character in terms of movement, we turned to the comic, yet refined character of *Topeng Tua*, the old prime minister.

A further mediation had to take place between the cultures of Java and Bali when the choreographer, Hidayat, was put in the role of Theseus. The character's movement had been based on the traditional Balinese movement vocabulary for strong (*keras*) characters. Hidayat, with a lifetime's training in the equivalent character type in Javanese *topeng*, was unable to adapt to the Balinese style. The result was a character with quite a different quality to that depicted in the mask. Whereas the



**FIGURE 1** Gill Foreshaw as Theseus in the 1998 production of *Hippolytos* (photograph Margaret Coldiron)



**FIGURE 2** Masks of Phaetra and Hippolytos were placed on an altar to signify their deaths in the Thiasos production of Hippolytos (photograph Margaret Coldiron)



**FIGURE 3** Ni Made Pujawati as Phaetra and Gemma Robinson as the Nurse in rehearsal for the 2004 production of Hippolytos (photograph Margaret Coldiron)



Balinese *Topeng Keras* is earthy, powerful and physically grounded, with a low centre of gravity, Hidayat's interpretation was lighter and more elevated, reflecting his training in Central Javanese *topeng*. Nonetheless it still possessed the necessary fierceness, even though this was communicated through a different movement vocabulary.

## Dance and poetry

The chorus dances were illustrative of the content of the songs. For example, the first chorus evokes women gossiping as they wash clothes in a running stream.

There is a cliff dripping water whose source, men say, is the river Oceanus, it pours forth over its beetling edge a flowing stream into which pitchers are dipped. It was there that I found a friend soaking her brightly coloured clothes in the river water and laying them out on the warm rock's broad back in the sun. From there it was that I first had news of my queen.

(Kovacs 1995: 137)

The flexibility of *jaipongan* made it possible for the choreographer to create a stylised encoding of women washing clothes and then to illustrate the further elaborations of this imagery in relation to the difficult lives of women and the more particular difficulties of Phaedra.

Although it clearly shows some relationship to the movements of *pencak silat*, the movement was re-defined, feminised and transmuted from a martial function to one of imagery and story-telling. Later in the play, the choreography used other images from the text as touchstones for the choral dances, the most evocative, perhaps, being the imagery of birds in flight and ships' sails in the ode sung when Phaedra leaves the stage to hang herself:

O that [. . .] there a god might make me a winged bird amid the flying flocks! O that I could soar aloft over the sea swell [. . .] To the apple-bearing shore of the melodious Hesperides would I go my way, there where the lord of the sea forbids sailors further passage in the deep-blue mere [. . .] O Cretan vessel with wing of white canvas, that ferried my lady over the loud-sounding sea wave from her house of blessedness, a boon that was no boon to make an unhappy bride.

(Kovacs 1995: 197)

The chorus 'flew' and glided about the stage as they sang creating patterns that echoed the imagery of the text, finally settling into a rocking motion with *selendang*<sup>9</sup> extended to create the image of a ship with unfurled sails as the actress playing Phaedra removed her mask, moved through the chorus and finally placed Phaedra's mask onto an altar in the downstage centre position, symbolically indicating her

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<sup>9</sup>*Selendang* are the long, wide scarves that Javanese dancers wear at the waist, the ends of which are held by the fingertips and used in myriad ways in traditional dance.

death. When Theseus entered, it was here that he found his dead wife, represented by the empty mask.

## Audience and reception

For whom are intercultural productions created? There is no easy answer to this. Some productions are designed for the international touring circuit – New York, London, Paris, Tokyo – where they hope to draw a sophisticated group that might include intellectuals and specialists who can appreciate the subtleties of the artistic choices made by the production. Others might be intended to shock and/or excite a staid, homogeneous or local crowd. As often as not, the creators of intercultural theatre become excited by an idea of cultural interaction with scant thought about who will see the piece and simply produce the work in the hope that some kind of sympathetic or like-minded audience will be attracted.

This production of *Hippolytos* was designed initially to send a rocket up the trouser leg of the Classical Studies establishment. The first audience had a certain homogeneity, since all were classics scholars, primarily specialists in ancient Greek and Roman literature and history. In this instance audience members were either delighted or appalled by the production, depending upon their particular scholarly prejudices. However, because the production had further incarnations, very different audiences gave rather different responses to the work.

A few months after its initial outing, *Hippolytos* was performed as part of the Interface Festival of Intercultural Theatre (in early 1999) for an audience of London theatregoers well versed in intercultural performance. It was presented in a small venue and had a powerful impact. Its next incarnation was at the Noh Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London, for a campus audience that consisted primarily of Asian specialists, classicists and students and faculty of the drama department. The production was received with enthusiasm – by the classicists because it was done with a new ‘twist,’ and by the Asianists because it used Asian performance techniques. Students liked it because it ‘wasn’t as boring’<sup>10</sup> as Greek tragedy was expected to be. In 2001 *Hippolytos* was performed at the International Festival of Ancient Greek Drama in a restored Hellenistic theatre in Paphos, Cyprus for a varied audience of Cypriots, tourists and British and German expatriates who were appreciative and surprisingly open to such non-traditional staging.

Most recently *Hippolytos* was performed at Dartmouth College, an ivy-league institution in rural New Hampshire, which provided an audience of students and faculty primarily from the departments of Classics, Asian Studies and Theatre in a typical 1970s-era proscenium stage. Here the intercultural production was enthusiastically received by an audience knowledgeable both about the play and with Balinese and Javanese performance. Members of the college’s Javanese gamelan group joined the production as instrumentalists and *kecak* chorus, creating a community ambience.

Each new production has thrown up new issues with changes of cast, alterations to the set, revisions of choreography, music and mask work. Each performance space placed different demands upon the production and each uniquely heterogeneous

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<sup>10</sup>This was the response of one undergraduate viewer (feedback session, January 1999).

audience had different expectations and differing responses to the piece. Because the response has generally been positive, the company has looked for more opportunities to perform the piece, especially because it seems to be succeeding in its mission to make audiences re-think their assumptions about the tragic chorus. In addition, it has attracted significant interest from Balinese academics and practitioners, who are keen to bring the production to the Bali Arts Festival.<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

So, what emerges from all of this? This *Hippolytos* is not a conventional production of a Greek tragedy. Having dispensed entirely with the dialogue, replacing it with narration and mimed action, the adaptation has moved closer to *sendratari* and far away from usual interpretations of the play to highlight the ritual qualities of the choral songs and dances. In addition, the stylisation of movement and the use of masks set the action of the principal characters on a mythic rather than human level. Yet it is possible that these departures from convention actually bring contemporary audiences closer to the essence of Greek tragedy as it was experienced by those for whom it was created. The non-Christian cultural setting also helped to re-animate the fundamentally religious aspects of the play for a modern audience.

The interaction of cultures in this production had a profound effect on the company, most especially when the play went to Cyprus, birthplace of Aphrodite. Ancient mosaics of Phaedra, Hippolytos and Theseus in the archaeological park adjoining the theatre and the temple of Aphrodite a few miles along the coast became places of pilgrimage for members of the cast. Balinese and Javanese offerings and rituals were an integral part of the company's preparations for performance, along with the more familiar theatrical rituals of physical and vocal warm-ups. Yet all of these rituals were executed as an easy, practical observance rather than a counterfeit sacralisation of the event.

Audiences, too, were affected by the unique quality of the production because of its focus on the chorus and the stylised 'ritual' quality of the action. Unlike the usual contemporary 'realist' rendering of the human drama, in this production the tragic story of Phaedra and Hippolytos was framed by choral hymns to the goddesses Artemis and Aphrodite. In this way the action of the play – rather than depicting a kind of horror story of uncontrolled passion, revenge and violent death – became a parable about the necessity for both moderation (Artemis) and erotic love (Aphrodite). Thus the tragedy ended on a note of worshipful reconciliation with the gods. Within its natural context Javanese and Balinese traditional performance successfully bridges the sacred and secular, making both aspects part of the whole dramatic event. In this production, these elements were interwoven with the rhythms and imagery of a classical Greek text utilising the special skills of the ensemble to create something wholly new. The complex intercultural language of

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<sup>11</sup>This thoroughly Balinese annual event has featured numerous intercultural collaborative exercises, both musical and theatrical. These include in recent years performances of Sophocles' *Oedipus* performed as *Arja* ('Balinese opera') and a version of the *Ramayana* combining Indian *bharatnatyam* with Balinese *Kecak* and *Gambuh*.

the production appears to have an appeal to a wide variety of audiences – European, American and Indonesian, classicists, Asianists and non-specialists alike.

In summary, let me return to Patrice Pavis, whose view of the *mise-en-scène* in intercultural theatre provides an apt description of the process of creating a production like this one:

*Mise en scène* is a kind of *réglage* (fine-tuning) between different contexts and cultures; it is no longer only a question of intercultural exchange or of a dialectics between text and context; it is a mediation between different cultural backgrounds, traditions and methods of acting.

(Pavis 1992: 6)

It is this ‘mediation between contexts and cultures’ that seems to me to constitute the work of intercultural theatre, allowing for flow in all directions and an enrichment of all the theatrical cultures involved. The intercultural performance discussed here set out to create not an ‘hourglass’ but, if you will, a kind of *ikat* fabric, an interweaving of theatrical cultures, a many-hued combination of strands producing a cloth revealing each element within the context of a comprehensible whole.

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