

Kakak Kau Punya Laki

Teater Ekamatra

18 – 22 December 2013, Esplanade Theatre Studio

Production information

Written by multi-award-winning writer, Alfian Sa'at, whose previous work with Ekamatra includes the large-scale *Causeway 2* (2002) and more recently *Nadirah* (2009) and directed and designed by Associate Artistic Director, Mohd Fared Jainal, *Kakak Kau Punya Laki*, with lighting by Anuar Mohd and sound by Anaiz Abdul Majid. To dramatise what many still consider a controversial subject, the most famous fugitive detainee under the Internal Security Act, Mas Selamat Kastari, Alfian Sa'at chose to use comedy and farce to best serve what he saw as a combination of absurdity and hysteria.

Featuring a cast of four women and one man to play the five sisters, *Kakak Kau Punya Laki* brought together artists whose past collaborations with Teater Ekamatra span its entire history. Though the play's theme is serious, the work was programmed to celebrate and conclude Ekamatra's 25th season.

Winning numerous awards at The Straits Times LIFE! Theatre Awards and nominated as Theatre Company of the Year by IS:Magazine (2011); Teater Ekamatra consistently performs to sold out houses with average audience attendance regularly at 85%. It has a reputation for being socially conscientious, for experimentations with theatrical form and styles, and for encouraging new writers.

Teater Ekamatra is a not-for-profit organisation and has been a producer of high quality theatre for more than 20 years, engaging thousands of audiences with its social-centric mission. Ekamatra means 'One Vision', garnering support from audiences of various races, nationalities and age groups. Its mission is to bring people together, and to invigorate and inject diversity into Singapore theatre.

(Synopsis and Theme)

Playwright Alfian Sa'at was inspired by the mysteries surrounding true-life detainee, Mas Selamat Kastari and was interested in "some of the dynamics operating within the darkness of preventive detention without trial." He also questions the concept that fundamentalism and extremism are necessarily a drift towards violence; and wonders why we examine serial killers from a psychological lens but choose an ideological lens when dealing with terrorists. Some of the darkness he explores includes "trumped-up accusations, confessions made under threat and duress, and 're-programming' of a detainee".

Four of the Selamat sisters are modern and successful: the wife of a prominent banker, a Maths teacher, a housing agent and a stewardess. Their eldest sister, Mas, is something else altogether. She is superstitious, old-fashioned, and smells like damp clothes. She sells curry puffs in front of MRT stations and collects magazines filled with stories of mystery illnesses, pontianak sightings and magic stones.

One day, Maslindah announces to her sisters that she has finally fallen in love. Her sisters are intrigued and alarmed, since they are convinced that Maslindah would remain a spinster forever. As they try to discover more about Maslindah's mysterious boyfriend, they are forced to confront their own prejudices towards Maslindah.

Kakak Kau Punya Laki is a play that raises questions about black sheep, outcasts and sociopaths. What exactly is the dividing line between normalcy and deviance? Who ultimately decides where to draw that line? And how do you solve a problem like Mas Binte Selamat?

Performed in Malay with English surtitles

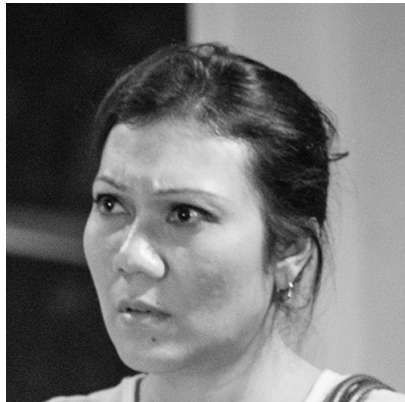
CAST

Maslindah Bte Selamat	.....	Najib Soiman
Hasnidah Bte Selamat	.....	Mastura Ahmad
Zuraidah Bte Selamat	.....	Noorlinah Mohamed
Junaidah Bte Selamat	.....	Farah Ong
Rashidah Bte Selamat	.....	Maimunah Bagharib

PRODUCTION

Playwright	.....	Alfian Sa'at
Director/ Set Designer	.....	Mohd Fared Jainal
Lighting Designer	.....	Anuar Mohd
Sound Designer	.....	Anaiz Abdul Majid
Publicity Designer	.....	Irfan Kasban
Production Manager	.....	Shaza Ishak
Stage Manager	.....	Nur Shahidah Idris
Assistant Stage Manager	.....	Habibah Mohckeram
Esplanade Sound Operator	.....	Unidentified
Surtile Operator	.....	Farisha Jubri
Make-up Artist	.....	Zulhelmi Bin Hasbi
Dressers	.....	Irini, Mimi
Stage Crew	.....	Farez Najid, Jamil
Esplanade Crew	.....	Unidentified
Front of House	.....	Moses Tan

Photos of Cast and Production (appearing in the documentary photographs)



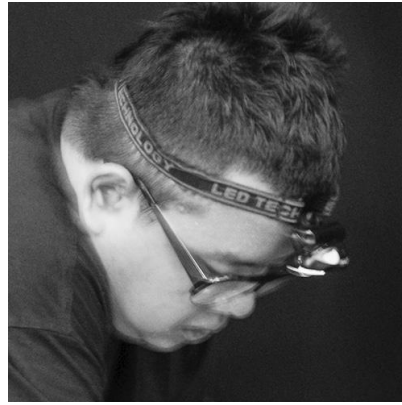
Mastura Ahmad



Maimunah Bagharib



Esplanade Crew



Esplanade Crew



Esplanade Sound Operator



Zulhelmi Bin Hasbi



Nur Shahidah Idris



Irini



Shaza Ishak



Mohd Fared Jainal



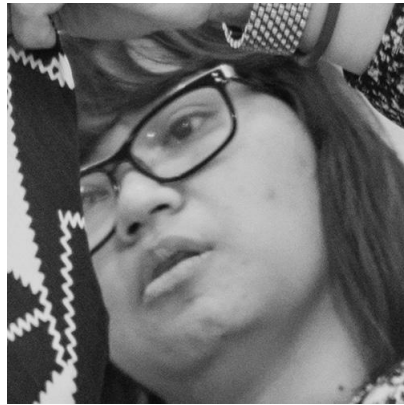
Jamil



Farisha Jubri



Anaiz Abdul Majid



Mimi



Noorlinah Mohamed



Habibah Mohckeram



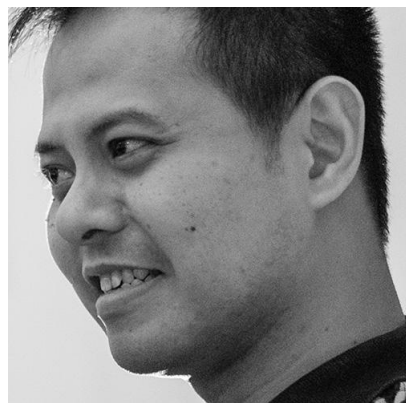
Anuar Mohd



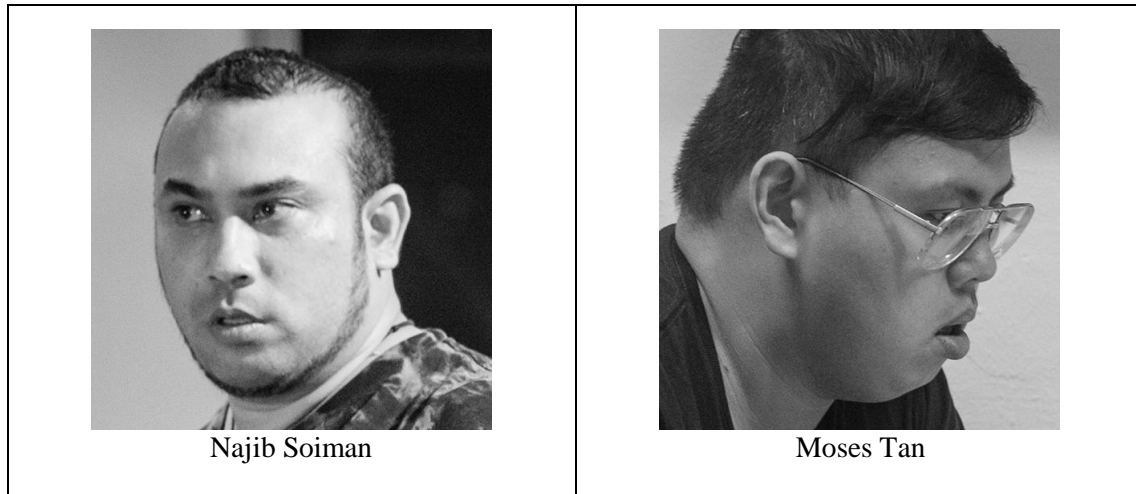
Farez Najid



Farah Ong



Alfian Sa'at



PROCESS NOTES

Teater Ekamatra's *Kakak Kau Punya Laki*, by A Yagnya

I was given the opportunity to watch a rehearsal and a full dress rehearsal for *Kakak Kau Punya Laki* and the following are the observations I made of the process.

The first day of my observation was at Aliwal arts centre and the full script had just come in that day and the first act of the play had just been 'blocked out' (ie staged).

Throughout the rehearsal, numerous movement sequences were blocked, rehearsed and re-rehearsed as was necessary to strengthen the ensemble work of the play. The music and movements were largely influenced by Islamic art forms.

I was then informed that throughout the play, the walls of the house were to move inwards, creating a smaller and smaller space that would trap the occupants. Otherwise, the set was to consist of a small platform, a sofa set and a coffee table.

When I asked the director, Mohd Fared Jainal if he or Ekamatra had any particular methodology, I was told that Ekamatra's process changes play to play and that this one in particular was meant to be a light-hearted comedy to celebrate and wrap up Ekamatra's 25th Anniversary Season.

The plot was as follows (Taken from Esplanade Website):

Among Pak Selamat's five daughters, Maslindah has always been the odd one out. The eldest of them, she leads a secret life handcrafting souvenirs for Malay void deck weddings. On Thursday nights, she smokes the house with Benjamin-gum incense and then feeds stray cats in the neighbourhood.

One day, Maslindah announces to her sisters that she has finally fallen in love. Her sisters are intrigued and alarmed, since they are convinced that Maslindah has been consigned to eternal spinsterhood. As they try to discover more about Maslindah's mysterious boyfriend, they are forced to confront their own prejudices towards Maslindah.

Kakak Kau Punya Laki is a play that raises questions about black sheep, outcasts and sociopaths. What exactly is the dividing line between normalcy and deviance? And who ultimately decides where to draw that line?

When I later went in to observe the full dress rehearsal, I was told that after a dramaturgical session with other members from Ekamatra, a lot of the play had changed and that major blocking changes had been made just a week before the play was to open. The dramaturgy session had given the director, Fared, an insight as to what worked and didn't work with the play and his production.

Another notable element was the costumes. All five sisters (including the eldest, played by a male, Najib Soiman) wore very malay outfits complete with the tudung (veil or headscarf). However, the way in which the Tudung was styled depended on the economic background, job and character of the sister. The richer the sister was, the more elaborate her tudung was styled. I was told by the costume designer that while tudung designing wasn't common in Singapore, women in Malaysia and other Islamic states did this more often.

The full dress run gave me a better idea of the visual ideas that Fared had for the play although most of the time was spent on making technical adjustments.

All in all, the play's comedy came through despite some of the more serious themes present in the play and it was a joy to observe the process over the two days.

Researcher: A Yagnya, 7 March 2014

General Editor: Aubrey Mellor, 6 January 2015