



UNIVERSITY of HAWAII®
MĀNOA
Kennedy Theatre

Department of Theatre and Dance
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December 14, 2011

“The Genteel Sabai” Comes to Kennedy Theatre with Pants-Slapping Action

Legendary Indonesian Fable with Female Heroine Who’s “Genteel” But Definitely Not “Gentle”

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Department of Theatre and Dance presents the rare theatre form of randai with its production of “The Genteel Sabai,” a folk dance-drama from the Minangkabau ethnic group in West Sumatra, Indonesia. Dr. Kirstin Pauka, Director and Professor of Southeast Asian Theatre at UHM along with guest teachers from Indonesia, bring this exciting theatre form back to Kennedy Theatre's main stage Feb. 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 at 8 p.m., and Feb. 12 at 2 p.m. Adapted by Musra Dahrizal and translated into English, randai combines beautiful singing, talempong music, dancing, acting, and story-telling along with its signature pants-slapping percussion and the Indonesian martial arts form called silat. This is the third time Pauka has directed a randai, the first in 2001 (“Umboek Mudo and The Magic Flute”) and the second in 2005 (“Luck and Loss: Manandin's Gamble”). Audiences will have an opportunity to attend two pre-show chats on Feb. 4 and 11 at 7 p.m.

Set in Sumatra, the title character and heroine of the story, Sabai nan Haluih (Jenilea Michaela Heath) is the object of affection of the powerful ruler and villain Rajo Nan Panjang (Lavour Vernon Addison), who will stop at nothing to get what he wants. When he sends his match-maker servant Palimo Banda Dalam (Christopher McGahan) to propose for him, trouble ensues as Sabai's parents Rajo Babandiang (Nicholas Murray Husted) and Sadun Saribai (E. Danielle Belvin) refuse the proposal. Sabai's father is murdered, and her elder brother Mangkutak Alam (Mark Flex Tenorio) refuses to confront the murderer, leaving it up to Sabai to take matters into her own hands. Other cast members include Alex Rogals and Trevor H. Craighead who play Panjang's faithful guards and provide much of the comic relief in the play. The production opens with 14 dancers parading onto the stage. As talempong music plays, the dancers march in slapping their pants, which make a deep hollow sound when the fabric in between the pants legs is hit. Jillian Blakkan-Strauss is the MC of the play.

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"Randai was chosen because of its unique features, such as its signature circle of dancers, the movement repertoire based on martial arts, and pants-slapping percussion, as well as the blending of other Minang art forms such as traditional singing, music, acting, and dance" stated Pauka, who also explained that randai does not attempt to be realistic. The theatre is staged in the round with audience-seating in the house as well as onstage. Pauka, who recently received the UH Regents' Medal for Excellence in Teaching, has studied randai, silat, and related arts in Sumatra while pursuing her doctorate in Asian Theatre at UHM. In collaboration with Pauka, two master teachers, Musra Dahrizal and Jasrial Jamaluddin, have been working with student performers for over six months to master this theatre form in intensive rehearsals.

Musra Dahrizal is a master artist and teacher with extensive experience in the performing arts of West Sumatra where he has taught students of randai for many years. Dahrizal is widely respected as a bearer of tradition and as a cultural elder for Minang arts. He is a highly sought after performer of saluang (flute), dendang (singing), dance and silat (martial arts) and is part of an award winning touring randai group that is considered a recognized National Treasure of Indonesia.

Jasrial Jamaluddin is a professional and accomplished musician and composer. He has won many prestigious awards and is the leader of one of the most successful traditional Minangkabau music ensembles in West Sumatra. Jamaluddin continues to be an active randai performer participating in performances throughout Sumatra and in neighboring Java. Jamaluddin's family has a strong lineage of randai performers and as a dedicated teacher and mentor, he continues his father's and grandfather's work by teaching the younger generations the art of randai and silat.

"The Genteel Sabai" is the first UHM Randai production to feature a strong female protagonist played by Heath, a double major in psychology and theatre who was last seen at Kennedy Theatre as Ophelia in "Hamlet" in fall 2010. Addison (the villain) might also be recognized from his performance this past fall in Tracy Lett's "Bug."

"The process has been physically challenging, even grueling at times, but also extremely rewarding," explains Addison who was drawn to the combination of dance, martial arts and the non-restrictive form of randai. "Though form and technique are absolutely essential, there is still a freedom to make our own choices when creating combinations." Addison explains that the dancers are the heartbeat of the story and inform the scenes. He further adds, "I was immediately intrigued by the character Rajo Nan Panjang and have been trying to find something that is his weakness. I don't see him as evil, but determined."

The design team includes scenic designer Maria L.S.L. Liu who transforms the main stage into an Indonesian village, costume coordination by Hannah Schauer and Cheri Vasek, and lighting design by Daniel Sakimura.

The randai training program and production of "The Genteel Sabai" are made possible with funding from the: UHM Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Hawai'i Council for the Humanities, East-West-Center, and Doris Duke Foundation.

Tickets for "The Genteel Sabai" are available online **now** at www.etickethawaii.com, at outlets, and by phone at 944-2697. Onstage seating will be available on a first-come first-serve basis at the performance to all ticket holders. Beginning Jan. 23 purchases may be made at the Kennedy Theatre Box Office Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. with extended hours on days of performance. Prices are \$22 regular; \$20 seniors, military, UH faculty/staff; \$12 students; \$5 UHM students with a validated spring 2012 UHM photo ID. Ticket prices include all service fees. Group rates are available for groups of 10 or more. For more information or disability access, call the Kennedy Theatre Box Office at 956-7655.

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WHAT: "The Genteel Sabai"

PRESENTED BY: UHM Department of Theatre and Dance

WHEN: Feb. 3, 4*, 9, 10, 11* at 8 p.m.
Feb. 12 at 2 p.m.

***Free Pre-show Chats:** Feb. 4 and 11 at 7 p.m.

WHERE: UHM's Kennedy Theatre, Mainstage

TICKET PRICES: \$22 regular; \$20 seniors, military, UH faculty/staff; \$12 students; \$5 UHM students with validated fall 2011 UHM photo ID.; all service charges included in ticket price.

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UHM Student Buy-One-Get-One-Free Night: Thurs. Feb 9, tickets available beginning at 5 p.m.