

PRODUCTION NOTES

William Maranda Productions

In 2003 I wrote an adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* for performance on the Balinese stage. It was imagined that all choral work and music, costumes and performance style of the great classical work would be recreated in the traditions of Balinese theatre. Having shown the translated work and the concept to Nyoman Wenten, a Balinese dancer and chairman of world music at CalArts in California, we agreed to proceed with the project and met at his house in Bali in the village of Sading in August 2005. We assembled a team of theatre professionals, including Nyoman Cerita, choreographer, Ketut Sukanta, composer, Warith Wisatsana, stage director, Dewi Susilawati, executive producer, Nyoman Budi Artha, special consultant and it was collectively decided that we would complete the project and bring a final production to stage at the Bali Arts Festival in 2006.

Auditions were held in the fall, translations of the work were competed and many sections of the scenes were further refined to accommodate the creative demands of incorporating three choral types, singing, dancing and the ubiquitous Kecak or Monkey dance.

Throughout December of 2005 intensive rehearsals were underway and Balinese camera men were busy capturing the developments as the work progressed through costume design, mask making, and movement training. The months of May and June in 2006 saw more intensive rehearsals until the performance on the great Ksirarnawa stage at the Arts centre in Denpasar. On the final day six cameras were employed including a Balinese JIB.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The Making of Raja Edepus is a documentary that has captured on film the explosive theatrical moments and the buildup of excitement that

occurred when two world famous forms of theatre coalesced, one the ancient Greek tragic theatre and the other, the traditional Balinese Topeng. The concept to bring about such a fusion of cultural forms, that is, to do an all Balinese adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, was first conceived in Vancouver, Canada, but its initial hatching occurred in Bali in the summer of 2005 when highly talented and popular Balinese theatre personalities endorsed the project with enthusiasm and were calling the work, by its translated Indonesian name, *Raja Edepus* and it was agreed that a production of the tragic drama would be staged at the Bali Arts Festival 2006.

In December 2005, regular rehearsals and preparation were well underway and Balinese cameraman had been given assignments to record the happenings surrounding the build-up of the theatre production. The activity of all of this happening, had created a buzz about the show as many artists and theatre people were looking forward to witnessing the culture collision that was slated to occur at the Bali Arts Festival in 2006 in the capital city of Denpasar. The public wanted to see what product would be produced when one takes the structured characterizations of Classical Greek theatre and revitalizes it with Hindu choral developments, exotic dress and the brassy gamelan sounds of the Balinese stage. They were also curious to see if indeed it would be possible to create an artistic fusion integrating ideas, emotions and moods that have a humanity separation of 2500 years.

What could be more thrilling for an audience than to watch well-known Classical characters walk a stage in colourful dress accompanied by the rhythmic sounds of a gamelan orchestra with its full-bodied expressions, metallic hammers, rising, twirling and crashing and to witness the chorus respond to dramatic circumstance with the hypnotic chirping of the monkey chants? Fortunately, we were well prepared for the final night and 6 well-positioned cameraman in the house captured the entire production as it unfolded..

In total 24 hours of HD tape had been shot and this having been skilfully edited, and reduced to this current 30 minute documentary. What had started out as an exploration into the world of merging

cultures has culminated in the production of a unique theatrical experience with no equivalent.

The production earned 14 reviews and an accommodation from the governor of Bali and by all accounts, what has been achieved on the Balinese stage can only be described as a world-class event