



## Greetings from the Executive Director

Storytelling has come a long way since the bygone days when people – young and old – used to sit around a venerable figure under a big banyan tree and listen rapturously to exciting tales of heroism, adventure and mystery. Oral storytelling was and remains in a few rural areas still untouched by modern technology, an essential part of local cultures throughout Indonesia. It is part entertainment, part lessons of life about good and evil, right and wrong. As kids, we loved listening, again and again, to the story of ‘*Si Kancil*,’ the mythical mouse-deer, and the many ways he would outwit farmers to steal from their vegetable gardens.

In time, other genres of storytelling evolved. Puppetry is probably the best known and best-loved, particularly when it depicts episodes from the Hindu classics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. There is also the traditional Javanese opera-ballet, narrating stories from the two great epics.

Then came the movies, followed by television and YouTube. The choices are endless. We now sit across from a screen and watch stories unfold, leaving oral storytelling to fall by the wayside. It is truly sad to see the children and the youth of today glued to their handphones or their laptops for entertainment.

So, it was a pleasant surprise to see Jakarta’s National Museum hosting a two-day Storytelling Festival earlier this month. More than 50 local and international storytellers performed in front of thousands of people of all ages, who came to watch various renditions of ‘Stories of Heroes’, the theme of the festival. There were four

## Ruminations by John McGlynn:

### Mementoes

In Indonesian there are several words for “souvenir.” One is *oleh-oleh*: gifts brought back from a trip, often snacks particular to the region visited (tempé crisps from Malang, for instance, or fermented cassava from Purwakarta). Another is *cinderamata*: keepsake items given away at weddings and even funerals which are frequently of questionable taste and use—a miniature wooden plaque, for instance, engraved with the words “Bagus & Feby Forever”—but, sometimes, at exclusive wedding receptions of only 3,000 close friends for children of the super rich, a Montblanc pen (marred by the words “Bagus & Feby Forever”). A third is *tanda-mata*, a memento that might be material or immaterial in form. *Doea Tanda Mata* is a 1985 film by Teguh Karya which I subtitled as *Mementoes*.

Older friends of Teguh Karya, especially members of Sanggar Teater Populer H.I. who performed in plays at Hotel Indonesia during the period 1961–1972 when Teguh worked as the hotel’s artistic director, called him “Steve.” Born Liem Tjoan Hok in 1937 and given the Christian name “Stefanus” at his baptism, it was in the 1960s when, at the government’s urging, numerous Indonesian families of Chinese descent adopted more “indigenous sounding” names. That is when Teguh changed his baptismal name from Stefanus to Steve and began to call himself “Steve Liem.” Several years later, however, after he switched from stage to screen director and because of further discriminatory pressure, he adopted the name by which he is known today.



JHM with Teguh at Sanggar Teater Populer in 1984.

*Continued on page 2*



separate stages presenting puppetry, dance and theater performances, a few of them in English. The organizers seemed confident that interest in the festival – the seventh of its kind in Indonesia -- will gain momentum, just like the book and literacy fairs cropping up around the country.



Wayang Luk-luk, Bali

One reason may be because the technique of storytelling is making a comeback, passing on new ideas, personal experiences and life-lessons in a way that evokes powerful emotions and insights. Indeed, studies have shown that storytelling methods yield better results in teaching school children how to listen and express themselves.



Didong, Aceh.

In the effort to contribute towards the preservation of Indonesia's oral storytelling tradition, Lontar has, over the years, recorded and documented 30 oral performances in video form. We will continue to add to this collection, to preserve local wisdom and local knowledge for future generations. As such, we hope you will join us in this project, one of Lontar's many, by donating generously to the foundation.

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Slamet Rahardjo, a co-founder of Teater Populer disliked his buddy's choice of name. "Sounds like the name of a dry goods store!" he once said to me. In retrospect, however, the alias is an appropriate one for *teguh* means "steadfast" or "unwavering" while *karya* is the term for "creative work." And while Usmar Ismail might be considered the father of the modern Indonesian cinema, then Teguh was definitely his direct heir for he, more than any other film director during the period 1971–1995, was a creative powerhouse and unwavering in his demand for high-quality film productions.

Teguh was not a hack, able to be dictated by Daddy Warbucks film financiers; he was an auteur who demanded perfection, from his first feature film in 1971, the dark and semi-autobiographical *Wajah Seorang Laki-laki* (Face of a Man), to his last feature film in 1995, the lighthearted *Pacar Ketinggalan Kereta* (which I titled, in English, "Prickly Heat").

Teguh Karya's films show his love of theater and acting and he launched the careers of many actors who are still active to this day: Slamet Rahardjo, Christine Hakim, Ria Irawan, Ninek L. Karim, and many more. And though a director, in charge of things to his core, Teguh was also very much a team player, forever encouraging his sometimes massive casts and crews to work together to bring out the best in one another. He was a friend to his crew and cast who engendered great loyalty in others, a fact which might help to explain why Sanggar Teater Populer remains active to this day, eighteen years after his death.

If not mistaken, I first met Teguh in 1982 at a film screening at Sinematek, the Indonesian Film Archives, and I believe it was Gufran Dwipayana ("Pak Dipo"), head of the State Film Production Company (PPFN), who introduced us. I had gone there to Sinematek to watch an Usmar Ismail film that I was to subtitle and, as this was a rare opportunity to view that maestro's work, Teguh and other filmmakers had been invited to the viewing as well.

Teguh had just started production on *Di Balik Kelambu* (*Behind the Mosquito Curtain*) and both he and Pak Dipo, who was to provide funding for the film's post-production work, were looking ahead and planning to have the film subtitled in English. That is where I came in.

Teguh invited me to visit the set of *Di Balik Kelambu*, which he had erected on the grounds of Teater Populer's new headquarters on Kebon Pala I, a short distance from my home in Pejompongan. My visit to the set became the first of hundreds that were to follow in the years to come. Over time, I came to love Teguh and count him as a close friend but I first fell in love with his house—which I want to tell you a little about for a good reason.

The house, a century-old mansion, had formerly been the home of the "Kapitan Arab" for Tanah Abang, the Dutch-appointed leader of the community of people of Hadhrami descent who populated that area. The house was a large one of Dutch colonial design with thick stone walls



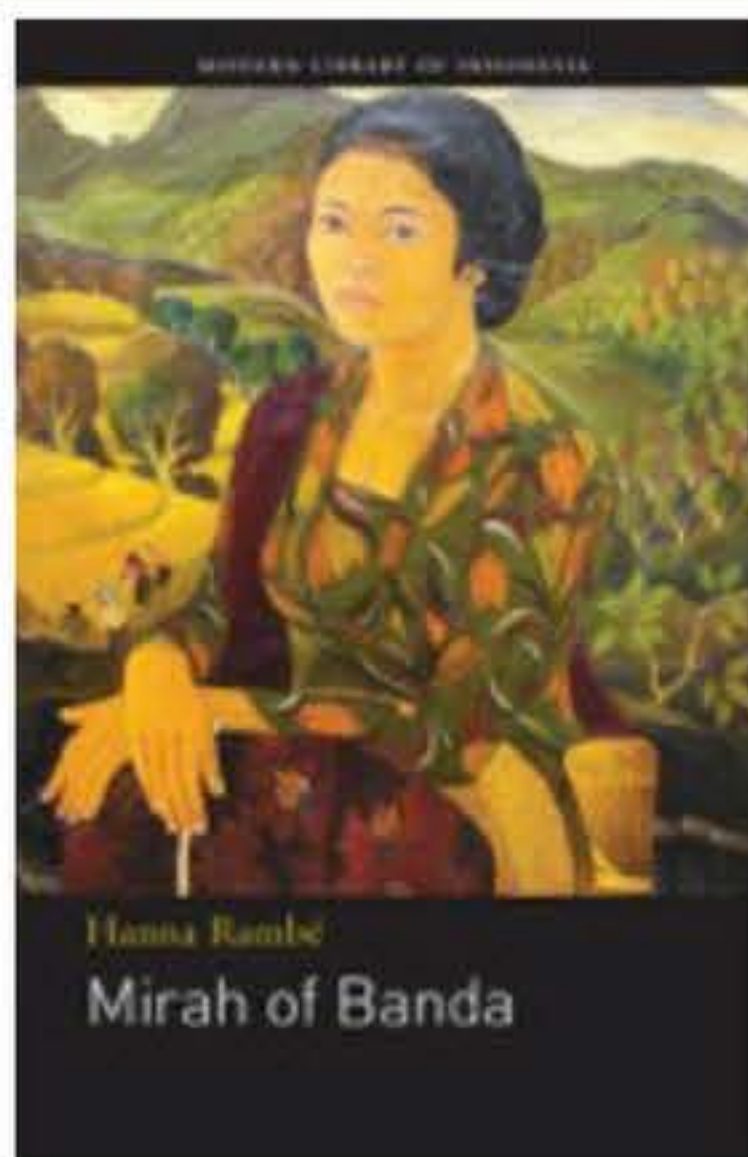
## Author of the Month



Hanna Rambe

**Hanna Rambe** (Jakarta, November 23, 1940) began her career as a journalist and English teacher. She worked for *Indonesia Raya* daily newspaper until 1974, contributed regularly to *Intisari* magazine (1972–1977) and reported for *Mutiara* magazine (1977–1992). She has written children's stories, stories for teenagers, novels, short stories and biographies. Her novels include *Mirah dari Banda* (1983) and *Pertarungan* (2002). *Mirah dari Banda* was translated into English and published by Lontar in 2010. She has also written several biographies, including *Lelaki di Waimital* (1981) and *Terhempas Prahara ke Pasifik* (1982).

## Book of the Month



### **Mirah of Banda**

By Hanna Rambe

Translated by Toni Pollard

Rp. 150.000,00

Book order: [contact@lontar.org](mailto:contact@lontar.org)

and towering columns at the front on an expansive terrace. With its many rooms, red terracotta stone floors, and twenty foot ceilings, the house was most impressive indeed.

When Teguh and Slamet Rahardjo bought the house it was sitting on a piece of property 800 square meters in size but because the alleys that bounded the property on its eastern and southern sides were no wider than a person's body—and consequently called *gang senggol* or “elbow-alleys” because a person was forced to elbow his way through the passages—the first thing that Teguh did was to donate a meter wide strip on those two sides to the community in order to build passageways around the property that could be accessed by motor vehicles. As a result, to this day, this man of Chinese origins continues to be held in high regard in an area of the city that has a reputation for ethnic intolerance.

This is my point: Teguh was very good at giving and his gifts to the community, the city, and the nation were many. The mementoes he left behind following his early death at the age of 64 in 2001 are of a kind that will last forever.

PS: Should you ever get a chance to see the film, *Mementoes*, and don't blink during a brief scene at the Wayang Museum which was doubling as a 1930s club house in the film, you will see a much younger me exit the club with a Dutch *juffrouw* at my side. For that scene, which was just a few seconds in duration, I spent more than 12 hours on the set, during which time I witnessed closely Teguh's camaraderie with his crew and cast. As tired as we all were that night, because of Teguh, we too remained steadfast in trying to do our creative best.

John McGlynn

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### Visited Sydney

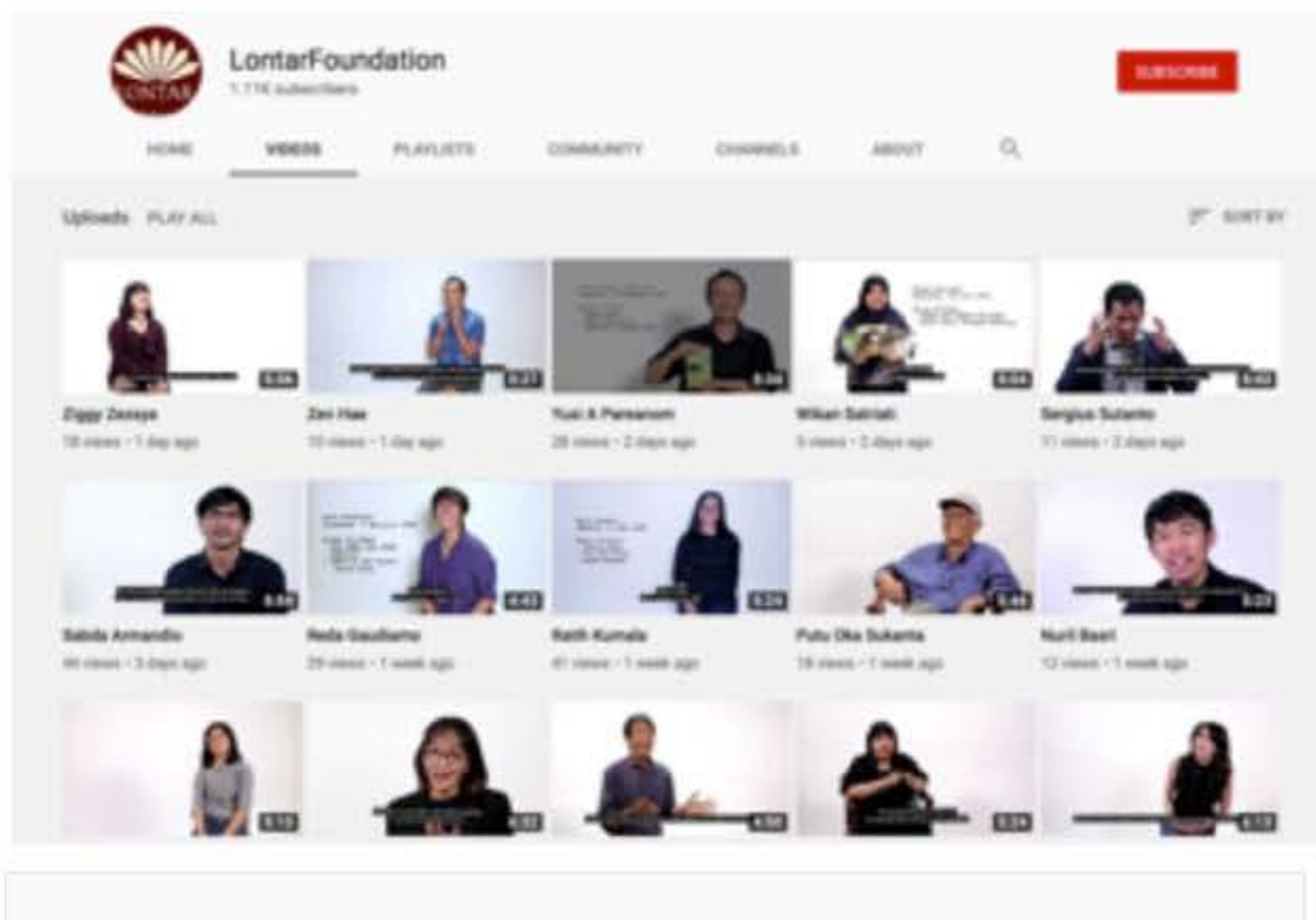
Lontar Executive Director, Yuli Ismartono, met Kestity Pringgoharjono, the former Executive Director who lives in Sydney now and established Indo Lit Club, and had held some discussion about Indonesian literature. Follow the update information on Facebook: Indo Lit Club.

### On The Record: Indonesian Literary Figures

Lontar-on-the-Record is a series of videos documentaries on Indonesian writers. As a follow-up to the 24 series already produced, in 2018 Lontar produced 33 additional writers' profiles of young writers, each lasting 5-8 minutes long. This documentation represents Lontar's effort in promoting — both in and out of the country — Indonesian literature and the works of Indonesian writers.

33 Writers are: Afrizal Malna, Ahmad Fuadi, Andik Prayogo, Anton Kurnia, Avianti Armand, Azhari Aiyub, Ben Sohib, Dea Anugrah, Dewi Kharisma M., Dias Novita Wuri, Esha Tegar Putra, Feby Indirani, Hanna Fransisca, Heru Joni Putra, Hikmat Darmawan, Iksaka Banu, Joned Suryatmoko, Kurnia Effendi, Laksmi Pamuntjak, Leila S. Chudori, Martin Aleida, Mona Sylviana, Ni Made Purnamasari, Nuril Basri, Putu Oka Sukanta, Ratih Kumala, Reda Gaudiamo, Sabda Armandio, Sergius Sutanto, Wikan Sastriati, Yusi A Pareanom, Zen Hae, Ziggy Z.

Lontar's channel on Youtube: LontarFoundation



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Kebayoran Baru, Jakarta Selatan



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