



USM

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# The Leader

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*Breaking  
Borders*



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# from the Chief Editor

The performing arts alumni is quite a force! They overwhelmed *The Leader* with articles, photos, and interviews. We hope other alumni will be just as earnest in making *The Leader* a quality magazine.

Editing the materials received was quite a task. We are obviously grateful and indebted to all of you. At the same time we are sorry that some contributions have to be deferred to later issues due to space and logistical constraints.

There is a proposal that this magazine should be sold at a nominal price in view of rising costs in printing. Nevertheless, a web version will also be maintained for those who prefer to go digital. While we are confident that both versions will get support from our readers, we hope there will be a sustainable number of alumni who will subscribe to receive the hard copies so that they can be more easily shared with non-subscribers and non-alumni.

For the time being, responses from readers seem to be very encouraging. We are receiving a steady flow of written and oral feedbacks, which keep the team's spirit high. Even though we do not respond individually, you can be assured of our gratitude for every comment and suggestion that you make.

The construction of the 'Alumni House' is progressing steadily. This building is planned specially for USM Alumni. Every alumnus should feel obliged to return to campus to reconnect with your alma mater. Make our house the meeting place to breath in again your memories. We implore ALL alumni who receive this message to contribute in speeding up the completion of this new place that will play a major role in uniting us and positioning USM as a model institution. Come, make this a reality. We value your contribution.

This 'house' is ours. USM Alumni is us.



Photograph by Alec Chin

**Chief Editor**  
Mohamed Talhah Idrus  
B. Soc. Sc. '74

## It's Us!



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Artwork by Mohamed Talhah Idrus

*revisiting*

Zainal Abd Latiff  
B. A. '74

NAGA

Zainal (in cap) and friends performing *Naga-Naga* in Panggung Sasaran in 1973  
(Photograph courtesy of Zainal Latiff)

Special Feature



he whole auditorium was quiet and the deafening silence certainly had us worried. What do we do? We were quite tensed when we performed at 8.00 p.m., and since the show started, the audience had been very quiet. We had no idea whether they liked what they saw, and in such circumstances, we were prepared for the worst.

I then mustered all my courage, went out to the middle of the arena and announced, "Sekian. Terima kasih (That's all. Thank you)." The audience, who had all the while been silent, suddenly broke into a loud applause, which meant that they liked the show. We were extremely relieved.

When we were invited to perform at Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM), we had mixed feelings. We were excited but at the same time we were also worried - excited because it was an honour for a Malaysian theatre group to be invited to perform at the prestigious TIM, and worried because we heard that only a few chosen ones were picked to perform at TIM, and in the back of our minds, we wondered whether we were really ready and whether we were good enough to perform. We were the first theatre group from Malaysia to perform at TIM. This was in late 1974. We had no choice but to trust our lecturer and director, Associate Professor Tone Brulin. That night became one of the most unforgettable events in our lives. The play that we performed was titled "*Naga-Naga Di Mana Kau, Naga-Naga Siapa Kau?* (Oh Dragon Where Art Thou? Oh Dragon Who Art Thou?)" We were lucky and proud to be students of USM.

Allow me to share some of the interesting things that happened when we studied Performing Arts at USM. Tone Brulin came to USM in 1973 to teach us Directing and Theatre Practicum. It was through the Theatre Practicum course that we did *Naga-Naga*. The course was conducted over two semesters. Learning from Brulin, a theatre director and producer, was a new experience for us. All these while, we had taken courses with (now Dato' Professor) Mohamed Ghouse Nasruddin, (now Dato' Professor) Ghulam Sarwar and (the late Professor) Roger Long, but with Brulin it was different. He approached theatre with a different energy and a different way of thinking. Most of the time, we could not understand his ways and where he was taking us. To me, he was a man way ahead of his time. It was only after we had performed *Naga-Naga* for about twenty times did we realise and understand what he was trying to impart to us. We were really impressed with his knowledge and experience. When he taught us the history of theatre, he did not refer to any note or book. The way he taught the subject was simply remarkable - it was as if he had met people like Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Dancenko, Bertolt Brecht, Erwin Piscator, and Peter Ceislak and lived during those times. Those figures come to life and their concepts and works became meaningful. Brulin succeeded in making the lessons interesting and informative, and I still could remember many of those theatre figures vividly.



Brulin (left) and Zainal at the performance venue in Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM)  
(Photograph courtesy of Zainal Latiff)

On the first day of class, Brulin brought with him a book entitled "Max Havelaar" and told us to make copies of the book and read it by the following week. It is a famous story from Indonesia, written by Multatuli. What was interesting about the incident was that Tone had also asked us to read the story of Adinda dan Saidjah, to be used as a basis for working towards a play. We were given the option of following the storyline if we liked it, or to discard it altogether if we found that it was not to our liking. We were at liberty to change the story. It did not matter. What mattered was that all of us had the same story so that we could discuss the subject as a group and come up with something workable for a stage performance. This was something new for us. We were used to staging a play by analysing a given script, but we were now being taught to rehearse so that in the end we could come up with a script. This was extremely cool. So, at every meeting we would improvise and sometimes Brulin would scribble some dialogues for us to work on. At other times, Brulin would ask us to create our own dialogues. Therefore, there was some kind of collaboration between the Director and the Actors. Each of us was then expected to improve on the dialogues given to us. As days went by, more dialogues were added and those dialogues grew stronger. In the end, we realised that we were comfortable with the dialogues because of the very fact that each of us had created and polished our own dialogues.

The play was a hit when we performed it for the first time in the canteen, now the Pusat Seni building. The audience may sit or stand as they please. They may stay and they may go. Surprisingly, the crowd grew larger and they did not leave until the show was over. The second performance was at the *sepak takraw*

court where the new extension of Pusat Seni now stands. The audience had the choice of standing up or sitting on the ground. It was really up to them. We did, however, notice that the audience stayed until the end of the performance. It also dawned upon us that you do not have to perform in an auditorium, and you do not have to have chairs for your audience to sit on. The audience will stay and watch if they like what they are watching. We learned a valuable lesson here - the performance must always be interesting and meaningful to watch.

*Naga-Naga* is a simple play about two lovers Adinda and Saidjah. Saidjah went to the city to gain wealth so that he could marry Adinda. In the city, Saidjah worked in a film company but realised that life in the city was not as good as he had expected. He then went back to his village and was surprised and sad to see that his village had changed from a tranquil haven into a busy industrial zone. The *kampong* folks had become factory workers and their lifestyle had changed. The other tragedy was when he did not find Adinda waiting for him under the *ketapang* tree, as promised. Adinda had been taken by the *Naga*. He then symbolically fought the *Naga* with his magic *keris*.

Here again we could see the creative Brulin at work. He once expressed what he thought *Bayan Lepas* would be like in twenty years. He predicted that the *Bayan Lepas* village would be transformed into an industrial zone and life would not be the same for the village folks. Many 'bad things' would happen and the *Naga* will reign supreme. The *Naga* will control the people and the people will not be able to identify the enemy. That is why the play is given the title "*Naga-Naga di mana kau? Naga-Naga siapa kau?*" This line was uttered by the chorus several times in the play, whenever the villagers are faced with a calamity. The play is symbolic and has several underlying meanings. At that time, the issues were corruption, gangsterism, the rising cost of basic commodities and nepotism. The play also dealt with faith, honesty, greed and repentance. Brulin had creatively designed the play to be performed using local idioms and icons.

Another amazing thing is the way Brulin directed us. The dialogues were in Malay, despite the fact that

## Revisiting Naga-Naga

Brulin himself did not speak a word of Malay. He directed by listening to the sound of the dialogues being uttered. He would instinctively know when someone changed the dialogue. Hashim Muzbidi, who played the role of the village *bomoh*, once forgot his lines and resorted to ad-libbing the dialogue. Brulin sensed that something was not right and immediately stopped him and said, much to our amazement, "I don't think those were the exact words you said yesterday!" We then realised that we could not 'fool' this old man although he did not speak Malay. Another actor who had the tendency to forget his lines was Mohd Izhar. He too was cautioned by Brulin to stick to the original words and not change them arbitrarily.

According to Brulin, there is no one way of doing theatre. When one directs a play, one should forget about the theories one has learned. One should just direct and make sure the production works. It does not matter whether it is Realistic, Expressionistic or Futuristic. What is important is that it works on stage and is interesting to watch. Theatre workers are usually familiar and comfortable with Realism. Brulin once got us thinking when he asked, "Just how Realistic can one be when doing theatre?" He argued that if you want to be Realistic, then you have to have an ambulance ready every night when you perform the Hang Tuah story, because Hang Jebat is stabbed in every performance.

Another lesson that we learned from Brulin is that a play is never complete or ready. It is always in-rehearsal, and the more you perform the more rehearsed the play will be, and it becomes better and more interesting every time it is performed. Besides playing at Sasaran and at different open-air venues on campus, we performed at the Dewan Sri Pinang. It was there that Brulin instructed us to perform in the centre of the auditorium, and not on stage. This created a whole lot of confusion and

a great deal of chaos, especially to the Dewan's management team because never before did they have to deal with a performance in the centre of the auditorium. Brulin stood his ground and spoke his mind - either we perform in the centre, or we don't perform at all. The organisers were in a fix because many VIPs would be attending the show. Eventually, the management team pulled out the chairs in the centre, much to the delight of Brulin and to the relief of everyone else.

Later, the show went on tour to Alor Setar, Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur. We were also invited to perform at the International Theatre Festival of Iran in Shiraj, but according to the Dean then, Professor Sharom Ahmat, the School could not afford to sponsor us.

Brulin taught us a lot. Besides opening our hearts to theatre, Brulin also opened our eyes to life. He showed us passion, dedication, commitment and sincerity. I was lucky when Brulin came to watch the opening night of "Antara" at the Istana Budaya. After the show, he hugged and congratulated me and said "I could see some elements of *Naga-Naga* tonight". Yes, I directed "Antara" based on my experience in doing *Naga-Naga* - not working from a script, but working towards a script. I can proudly say that Brulin has been of great influence to me, especially in approaching a production. The message that was imparted was that when creating a play, the most important thing is to ensure that it is pregnant with meanings and relevant to the audience. Only then does the job of producing a play become meaningful and worthwhile. I believe many more plays can be created now as the issues in *Naga-Naga* lend themselves well to the many ills of today, such as corruption, nepotism, scandals, cronyism and mismanagement. *Naga-Naga*, to me, is still and will continue to be relevant.



Zainal and his wife, Tengku Noor Khazainah (B. A. '75) (Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus)

Zainal browsing through a copy of *The Leader* (Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus)



Dr Zainal Latiff is a retired USM lecturer now residing in Pulau Pinang.

# PAK AYUB'S *Shadow Affair*

Rusly Jamaludin

Artwork by Rusly Jamaludin

*Ai... kalu nok gugo...  
Amboi gugolah nangko...  
Ai... jange menimpo...  
Di dahanlah pauh la...  
Ai... kalu nok tido  
Amboi tido lah mato la...  
Ai... jange mengingat...  
Jauh... oghe lah jauh*

*(A verse from a traditional lullaby sung in the Kelantanese dialect)*

The uncanny voices of a *dalang* (master puppeteer) hymning a storypiece blended with the hypnotic percussion of *gedumbak* (drums), *tetawak* (knobbed gongs) and melodious *serunai* (flute) drew my attention.

It was in that puny 'box-office' at the rear of the old Pusat Mahasiswa. (building 328/D20) reminded me of the shadows of its past. It was an immense privilege meeting the *dalang* and his fellow troupe 'gigging', before my eyes, of which I had never understood then.

He sat cross-legged, gentle and reflective, while his great workman crafted a bovine-hide puppet. Mirthful and sprightly, he stood without wasted motion and extended a regal hand in greeting. When he bade me to sit down in his 'box-office', his tone was more of a command than of an invitation. The man, holding me so enthralled, was the late Mr Ayub Ismail or Pak Ayub, as he was affectionately known.



Pak Ayub's Shadow Affair



The 'box-office'  
(Photograph courtesy of Che Mat Jusoh)



Jumilah (right) demonstrating a **Mak Yong** dance to Mubin Shepard and Dato' Dr Sharom Ahmat  
(Photograph courtesy of Jumilah Md Tahir)

Nearly thirty years later, that 'hymning piece' of Pak Ayub is still an 'instant appeal'. Coincidentally, a former student of Pak Ayub, Jumilah Md Tahir now a performing arts teacher, took several years to understand the melodic craftsmanship that invariably carried an emotional charge.

She recalled one day and approached Pak Ayub: "How did you do that? Tell me, what do you do to keep up such good melody?" He replied, "Well, you need to make music which balances the passion and the mind and that speaks directly to the heart."

Music and performing arts had been a constant passion for Pak Ayub from an early age. He lived and breathed *Gamelan*, *Mak Yong*, *Menora*, *Main Puteri*, and *Wayang Kulit Kelantan*, and practiced what he preached. He owed his success due to the fact that he was very good at all of them. He was the man instrumental for the development of Pejabat

Kebudayaan under the Students' Affairs Department (as it was then). He shared his expansive talent with the performing communities of which he was a part of.

Dato' Professor Mohamed Ghouse Nasuruddin described Pak Ayub's uncommon acquirements and diverse abilities were the essence of this unassuming man.

"In the minds of many people he was what many will describe as an *artiste extraordinaire par excellence*. His mastery of skills was pervasive, adept at countless instruments, extending from the musical genre of traditional folk theatres to western music." Ghouse explained, and quickly added: "Malaysia's best-known performer, the late prima donna of *Mak Yong*, Khatijah Awang was his student!"

*Pak Ayub's Shadow Affair*

He had on the whole merged his endearing personality with that of the 'dalang', so almost every bit of it reflected some facet of his multi-tasked affair as a cultural administrator from 1978 to 1992.

He was a 'teacher' rather than an administrator; well-liked among his staff and students, but more reticent than his two deputies (dramatist, Mr Yalal Abu Chin and a *bangsawan* performer, Mr Mohd Bahroodin Ahmad).

There was a surprising degree of accord between him and his pupil. He teaches with a sincere desire to make learning enjoyable. Every one who was in contact with him never doubted his passion.

A staunch practitioner of folklore theatre, Che Mat Jusoh, viewed Pak Ayub as a caring teacher who contributed continuous compassion and motivation. It comes as no surprise that Che Mat has also attained similar mastery of the skills inherited from his beloved teacher.

"He was there to show me, he never stopped, and he was always showing me 'the light at the end of a tunnel'. If it wasn't for Pak Ayub, I could have been dejected a long time ago," Che Mat said heartwarmingly.



*Che Mat (left) spent several years intensively learning by heart the many stories and incantations from his skilled shadow master, Pak Ayub (right) (Photograph courtesy of Che Mat Jusoh)*



*Make-over for a performance (Photograph courtesy of Jumilah Md Tahir)*

*Rendering a song in Pesta Konvo at Minden field, USM (Photograph courtesy of Jumilah Md Tahir)*

Pak Ayub's Shadow Affair

Pak Ayub's work was a feat of endurance; it remained a work of staggering resource and beauty. He instilled a visionary depth, a glimpse of many untold stories. Wishing to make wider public statements, Pak Ayub did document a final draft manuscript on his performing experience. Sadly, he died on 29 June 1992 and the project never reached fruition. How I wish it had continued and been published. His frontispiece remained private and elusive - then and perhaps, forever.

To date, the *wayang kulit* theatre exhibited in the present Museum and Gallery stands as a resolute reminder of his ideas and production. Although the 'box-office' no longer exist, Pak Ayub's self-described 'shadow affair' remains soulful in its presence, not likely to be overshadowed even by the imposing Dewan Budaya in its proximity.

*Performed to the melodic chorus of drums and wind instruments, Pak Ayub staged his shadow play with an intense personal experience for the beholder. (Photograph courtesy of Che Mat Jusoh)*



Rusly Jamaludin is currently a lecturer at the School of Housing, Building and Planning, USM. He can be reached at [rj\\_hbpsm@yahoo.com](mailto:rj_hbpsm@yahoo.com)

For the pioneers of the School of Cultural and Community Studies (now School of Humanities), in 1970, Mr (then) Ghulam Sarwar was synonymous with the drama section. He initiated the first play we ever did, *The Sacrifice*, by Rabindranath Tagore, which was staged at the Malayan Teachers' Training College and the Sri Pinang Hall (now Dewan Sri Pinang).

# The Trail-Blazer

Hamima Dona Mustafa  
B. A. '73

Ghulam's association with the Universiti started in May 1970 when Vice Chancellor Hamzah Sendut and his assistant, Mr S. Kandasamy, walked into his family's shop in Chulia Street, Pulau Pinang, inviting him to work the newly set up Universiti Pulau Pinang.

Hamzah, Kandasamy and Ghulam knew each other when they were in University of Malaya (UM) in the 60s. Ghulam who graduated in 1964, caught the attention of Hamzah, a Resident Fellow, through his active participations with UM's theatre. His later involvements with the Penang Graduate Society, the Penang Festival project, and the Literary and Drama Association (LIDRA) may have influenced Hamzah's invitation.

"Why are you wasting time here?" Hamzah asked.

"Come and join the Universiti."

"To do what?" Ghulam asked

"Performing arts," Hamzah replied.

"I'll do literature for you," volunteered Ghulam who graduated in English literature.

"I've got someone else to do that," Hamzah replied.

Seizing Ghulam's silence, Hamzah persuaded, "Come and give it a try."

"I'll do part time," Ghulam relented.

That 'part-time' turned full-time, when Ghulam settled comfortably into his new environment. He was given a free hand by Hamzah, to do "what you feel is appropriate". Friends, such as, Krishen Jit, Vijaya Samarawickrama, and Professor Edwin Thamboo, cooperated with Ghulam to develop the first year's drama curriculum which incorporated Eastern and Western traditions, as well as curricula for dance and music.

On many fine mornings, classes for the less than 20 students would be held under the flame of the forest trees. They were also taken to Kedah to watch folk performances such as *wayang kulit*, *menora*, *Awang Batil* and *selampit*.

Hamzah then suggested Ghulam should pursue graduate work. "In the mean time, we could advertise for people to join the section," he said.

Through Professor Robert Van Niel, the dean of the School of Humanities then, Roger Long was recruited, followed by Tone Brulin. Van Niel who was from Hawaii put Ghulam in touch with Professor James Brandon, a name to be reckoned with in Asian theatre at the University of Hawaii, to study theatre in Southeast Asia.

Hamzah's words were to play in his mind, "Don't come back without your Ph.D."

Ghulam doing field work with local artistes  
(Photograph courtesy of Ghulam Sarwar)



Ghulam left for the University of Hawaii in mid-August 1972. He recalled having to cram academic as well as practical activities such as having his first go at playing the gamelan and performing the wayang wong, in Javanese costume, all during that first semester.

Back in Malaysia in 1973, Hamzah took it upon himself to 'put on the plane', Ghulam's wife, Hajrah Bebee Nabi Baksh and his two sons, Malik Mumtaz Ahmed and Malik Imtiaz Ahmed, to join him in Hawaii.

For his research topic Ghulam studied the *makyong*, which was introduced to him in 1969 during a performance at the Southeast Asian Music and Drama Festival at UM. "The sound of *makyong* music

vibrations played by old people made his hair stand on end. The music was powerful, exuding mystic energy" Ghulam recalls.

Ghulam contacted Professor William P. Malm in Michigan, the biggest collector of *makyong* music in the world for some of the music. To be used in Raja Tangkai Hati (Beloved King), which he had translated into English to show to his doctoral committee.

Malm was not only willing to provide the recordings but he wanted Ghulam to "do the full show," continuing with, "I am coming to help you."



**Mak Yong** dancers paying rapt attention to Ghulam's explanation  
(Photograph courtesy of Ghulam Sarwar)

The Trail-Blazer



Dalang Hamzah supervising Ghulam in manipulating the leather puppet used in wayang kulit (Photograph courtesy of Ghulam Sarwar)

Hence, in the summer of 1974 a makyong performance was staged with a non-Malaysian cast and a team of borrowed musicians from the gamelan course. Needless to say, Ghulam's topic for his Ph.D thesis was approved. Ghulam secured a grant from the East-West Centre researching a full year in Kelantan, from 1975-1976. After completing his studies, Ghulam resumed work with USM in December 1976.

In consonance with Hamzah's philosophy of 'know your home, then your backyard, then the world', Ghulam then introduced the bangsawan, and introduced into the Universiti's drama programme traditional artistes, such as Mak Minah Yem and Pak Ilias, as part-time instructors. He also engaged the expertise of Dalang Hamzah Awang Amat for wayang kulit courses.

Ghulam who retired in 1994, is now Adjunct Professor at the Cultural Centre, University of Malaya (UM).



A recent photograph of Ghulam during the interview, August 2008 (Photograph by Yong Check Yoon)



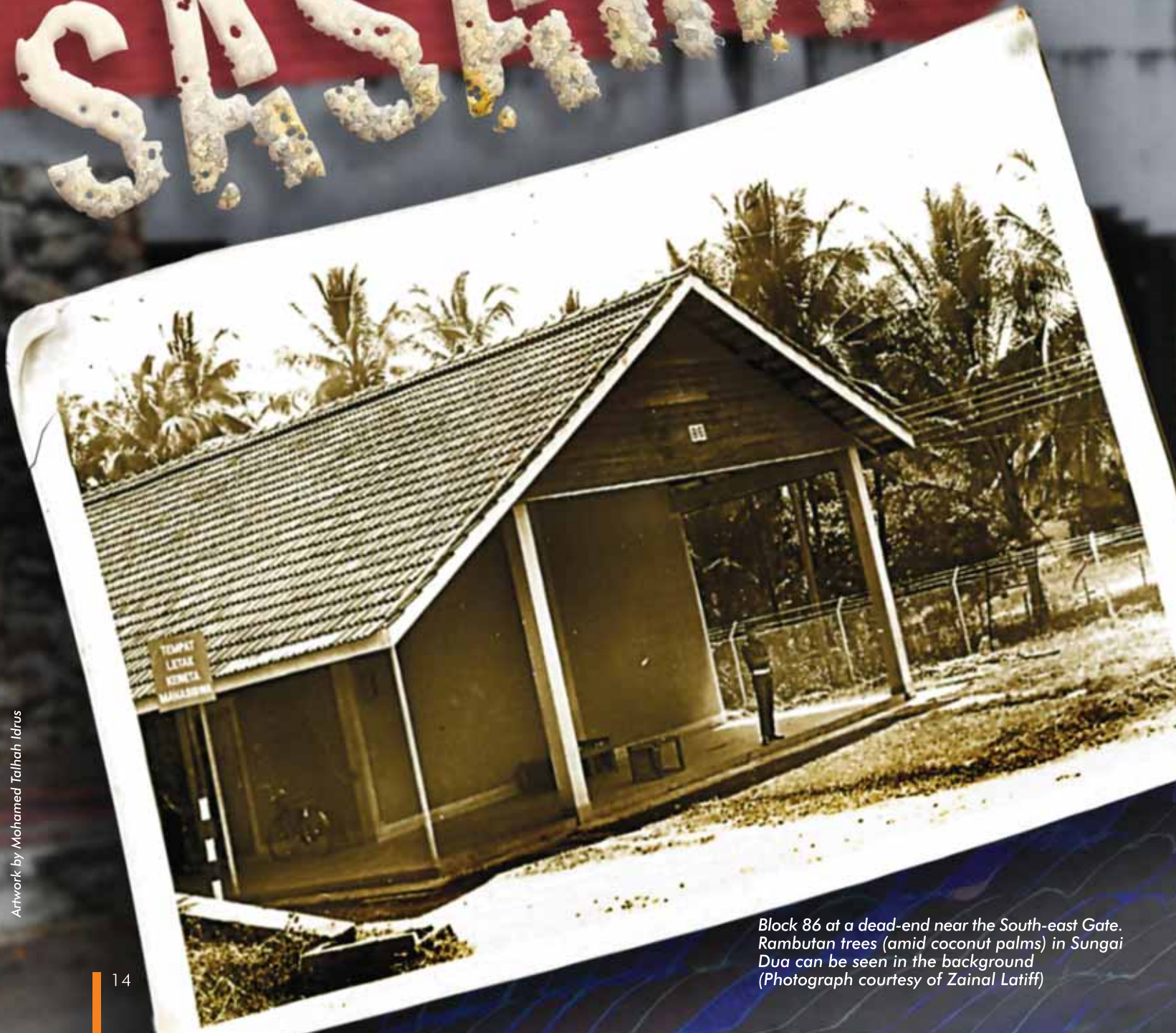
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Mohamed Talhah Idrus  
B. Soc. Sc. '74

# Panggung

# SASABARAN



Block 86 at a dead-end near the South-east Gate. Rambutan trees (amid coconut palms) in Sungai Dua can be seen in the background (Photograph courtesy of Zainal Latiff)



**Less** than two years after the Minden (military) Barracks was turned into a university campus, students majoring and having interest in performing arts were given a building to practise their trade. The site was formerly used by the British army for target practice. It was a lonely and quiet corner fed by a small road leading to a dead-end. A gate called the South-east Gate was occasionally opened to allow trucks to get to Sungai Dua.



The partially completed *Panggung Sasaran* in 1972  
(Photograph courtesy of Zainal Latiff)

(Right to left) Norehan, Junian, Kak Ani, Hashim, and Zainal practised in whatever available space they could find before *Sasaran* was built  
(Photograph courtesy of Zainal Latiff)



Zainal Latiff proudly displaying the banner proclaiming the newly named *Angkatan Sasaran* at Block 103 of the boys' hostel (now KANITA) in 1972 (Photograph courtesy of Zainal Latiff)



In line with the practice of assigning numbers to buildings, this new building covering this former shooting range was given number 86. It remained as "Block Eighty-Six" until one day in 1972.

Dr Zainal Abdul Latiff (Humanities 1974) recalled how Associate Professor Tone Brulin casually proposed the idea to his band of student performers, "We need to have a name!"

Brulin, a Belgian playwright who was recruited by Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) to help develop the Performing Arts Department of the university, pushed on, "This place was a shooting range;

there was a target here. What is 'target' in Malay?"

"*Sasaran*", a student responded.

"Say-se-ran sounds good", Brulin mused. "What's the word for 'group' in Malay?"

The responses were now more enthusiastic and rapid. "*Kumpulan*", someone answered. "*Kelompok*", came another response. "*Angkatan*", yet another offer.

"Eng-key-ten" sounds good, Brulin concluded. "We shall call our group Eng-key-ten Say-se-ran".

Panggung Sasaran



*Kapai-Kapai* by Roger Long was one of the earliest plays to be staged at Sasaran (Photograph courtesy of Zainal Latiff)

Tahir have remained with the theatre. Some like (Dato') Azhar Abu Bakar, the present Director-General of Istana Budaya (literally 'The Palace of Culture'), and Sharifah Mahani Syed Kassim, a choreographer, have stamped a different mark in the Arts.

This humble theatre that occupied what used to be an empty corner of the campus has grown into a university landmark, hosting many well-known playwrights like Kala Dewata, Tone Brulin, the late Roger Long and wife Louis, Mohamed Ghouse Nasruddin, Kee Thuan Chye, Zainal Abdul Latiff, Samat Salleh, resident artists, and even foreign groups from Indonesia and the USA.

Panggung Sasaran today. Part of the School of Housing, Building and Planning (HBP) is visible in the background (Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus)



The students were by then excited about the idea of a group identity. One student, however, was pessimistic, "But we should be careful, the word *sasar* can be confused with *sasau*, which means half-mad".

"That's good! We are all mad people", Brulin casually replied.

That marked the birth of Angkatan Sasaran, USM's performers, who were often joined by students from outside the The School of Humanities. Sometimes, the name was shortened to Angkasaran. Block Eighty-Six was dubbed "Sasaran" (The Target), the appendage "Panggung" (Theatre) came later.

Panggung Sasaran has seen many well-known faces performing, directing, or producing plays in it. The original Angkasaran group of Zainal Latiff, Shuib Khalid, Mi Mi, Fuziah, Hashim Mosbidi, Zainal Hashim, Mahyuddin Mahmud, and others from the classes of '74 and '75 have expanded to include TV and movie personalities such as Ahmad Tarmimi Sarigar, Jessica Lim, Hamzah Tahir, Aminah Rapor, Zaibo. Many others, such as Kee Thuan Chye, Marion D'Cruz, Janet Pillai, Elizabeth Cardoza, Anne James, Louis Chong, Hardy Shafii, Hatta Azad Khan, Rosminah

The road to Sasaran leads no more to a dead-end. Target-shooting has long ceased. It is now busy with cars and wannabees. Dancers and performers continue to patronise Block Eighty-Six, a.k.a. Sasaran. To them it will never stop being the Target.



Every April, a creeper on a *pukul lima* tree would shower blossoms, paying tribute to the modest Sasaran (Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus)



Associate Professor Mohamed Talhah Idrus is currently a lecturer at the School of Housing, Building and Planning, USM. He can be reached at [tolamaha@yahoo.com](mailto:tolamaha@yahoo.com)

## What Say They...

Congratulations on the publication of *The Leader*. I anxiously await each issue of the magazine because it brings back the good memories of my four years at USM.

**Faridah Abdul Malek**  
B. Pharmacy '79

The approach used by *The Leader* is not only confined to the alumni and this is praiseworthy, examples being the articles on Pak Kob and Ann Tan. These are interesting stories that alumni can associate with and help recall many fond memories in USM. The articles do not revolve around only famous individuals. However, *The Leader* has to nurture elements that are in line with the university's aim of developing 'USM as a sustainable university' and these should be reflected in *The Other Resident* department.

**Ahmad Anas Ismail**  
Research officer, Discipline of Social and Administrative Pharmacy,  
School of Pharmaceutical Sciences

*The Leader* is a potentially good platform to bond USM alumni as a family and for improving networking among us. Congratulations!!! Hope that it will grow stronger and enjoy continuous success.

**Sabariah Nordin**  
HBP '05

The articles and photographs in *The Leader* are excellent. *The Leader* reminds me of my student days in the university that will be treasured in my memories.

**Mohd Azad Jasmi**  
B. Mgmt. '98

*The Leader* triggers many fond memories that are close to the heart. Congratulations to the editorial team. I would like to thank you for continuing to send *The Leader* to me and congratulate the editorial team for the great job done. Many memories tugged at my heart strings as I went through *The Leader*. Perhaps for the coming issue, it is possible to feature the story of two Desasiswa Bakti employees: Mdm Yap and her husband Mr Yeoh. They have been working at the Desasiswa Bakti as a clerk and a technician respectively. They were really committed towards their job and were friendly to all, regardless of their race.

**Kamal Pardi**  
B. Soc. Sc. '91

We have read *The Leader* from cover to cover. Thanks so very much for making this possible. You and your colleagues have done a wonderful job putting together an alumni magazine of this high calibre and quality. Congratulations on the high quality of the photographs and the very nostalgic articles in the magazine. We really relived the good old days at USM with much happiness. Do keep up the good work. Thanks once more, and with best regards.

**Gaik and Noel Ogle**

*Sila started it all*

Artwork by Rusly Jamaludin

Yong Chek Yoon

*Silat Started It All*

**F**ascinated by the graceful but lethal movements of the Malay martial arts *silat*, Mr Mohamed Ghouse Nasuruddin (now Dato' Professor) studied it at Jelutong and Sungai Nibong. Every move communicates a purpose and he saw that *silat* has a relation with dance forms. They, too, are fluid and 'communicate' with the audience.

Then aged 15, Ghouse used his knowledge of the martial arts to perform with his friends at functions such as weddings for two years even as he was studying at the Penang Free School. During this period *silat* sculptured his body with muscles while improving his flexibility and agility that eventually helped his dances.

Thereafter, he proceeded with his undergraduate studies at Universiti Malaya where he also obtained a Diploma in Education. He was involved with the Persatuan Bahasa Melayu (Malay Language Association) and he learned to dance and choreograph the association's annual music, dance and drama performances. In 1969 the team was invited to perform before the King of Tonga.

He started a group called the Penari Penari Siswa (Graduate Dancers) and they performed all over the campus and residential halls. As their popularity grew they were invited to perform at Istana Negara. Television producer now Datuk Ahmad Othman Merican also used Ghouse's dancers in programmes on Radio and Television Malaysia (RTM). Ghouse was then sent by Othman to learn ballet.

After his graduation, he taught at Abdullah Munshi Secondary School where he was put in charge of dance and drama and he turned it into a co-curriculum activity.

The big break came when he was called for an interview and received a Fulbright scholarship in 1971 to do theatre, dance and music in Indiana University at Bloomington in the United States. There he did classical ballet and dance in full-length ballet, nutcracker ballet, main classic musical, and spring ballet. After completing his contract with the Ministry of Education, Ghouse was appointed an assistant lecturer.

Ghouse taught theatre and production at USM and among his early batch of students were (now Associate Professor) Samat Salleh and (now Dr) Zainal Latiff. He headed back to Indiana University to do his PhD on a Ford Foundation scholarship and continued performing classical ballet.

"There I danced with world class dancers like Natalia Makarova, Ivan Nagy and Rudolf Nureyev," he reminisced.

Ghouse has over the years written six books on Malaysian music, theatre and dance. He has more than 20 plays to his name and had acted on stage and in film.

"There is no regret because USM had offered me an invaluable opportunity to prove myself," he said, adding that *silat* was the reason for his passion for dancing. If you have ever watched Ghouse dancing, you would certainly have witnessed poetry in motion ... fluid moves with a sense of continuity.

Photograph courtesy of Marion D'Cruz

Photographs courtesy of Ghouse Nasuruddin



Yong Check Yoon is currently an Editor in the Alumni Liaison Office, USM. He can be reached at [cyyong@notes.usm.my](mailto:cyyong@notes.usm.my)

# Marion D'Cruz

Artwork by Mohamed Talhah Idrus

I teach at four colleges/universities in Kuala Lumpur. In a year, I face a total of about 700 students with the average age of 20. In them, I see much damage that has been done by our education system - or rather, the lack of an education system - and by the systems of injustice, aggression and racial polarisation, and the politics of religion and economics, that is getting dangerously extreme.

I love teaching. I take it very seriously. While imparting knowledge, I aim, more than anything else, to make these young people think. I aim to make them take ownership and responsibility for their lives and decisions, and for all that is around them. As a teacher, I am provocative and insane. I employ all necessary methods and more, to get them out of their slumber; out of their 'There's nothing we can do' attitude. Despite trying year in and year out, I am losing the battle, as most of the forces around me continue to work against all I believe in. But I strive. *Jihad.*

I must believe in the hope of a better Malaysia as we journey towards 2057. I will not be quiet.

I see good things happening in the dance department of Akademi Seni Budaya dan Warisan Kebangsaan (ASWARA) where I teach. And no, this is not a plug for ASWARA. It is merely the truth of a system that defies all, and in so doing, harkens for something great.

would you  
zapin with me?

Marion D'Cruz  
B. A. '77

Would You Zapin With Me?

Personality

Marion teaching a group of students

In the ASWARA dance department, all students must learn Malay classical dance, Malay folk dance, ethnic dances from Sabah and Sarawak, ancient dances that are dying out, Chinese dance, Indian dance, ballet, contemporary dance, *wayang kulit*, *makyong*, *bangsawan*, *silat*, *tai chi*, and several theory courses. In so doing, they are given the opportunity to 'consume' these forms in their bodies, their intellect and their souls. As their bodies take on these various forms, they learn about these cultures, the stories of peoples, the histories, the memories, and they begin to take ownership of these cultures to varying degrees.

Indeed, it is not just about learning many dances. It is about understanding the myriad that is Malaysia.

One day, as I left ASWARA, I saw a sign of hope of what Malaysia could become. The final year students were practising their *zapin* (a traditional Malay dance originally from Johor). The group consisted of male and female dance students, Malays, Chinese and one Indian. They were all doing their *zapin* with great joy and flair as the young Chinese boy from Penang led their rehearsal. This is the Malaysia I nurture and hope for. These students have taken free ownership of this traditional form - a mixed group of young dancers filled with the joys and subtleties of a beautiful Malay dance.

And then there is my gardener Karam Singh in whom I see a sweet, gentle, honest Malaysia. He is friend to all and speaks Malay, Punjabi, Hokkien and some English. He works harder than anyone else I know. He 'owns' the neighbourhood through his hard work. He brutally speaks the truth all the time. His life is not easy. And it is painfully honest. He seems aggressive and speaks very loudly. But his eyes tear when he shares the woes of his life with me. An honest Malaysian.

These are the people who remind me of what I hope to see Malaysians becoming in the next 50 years.

When we are all dancing the *zapin* and when the believer of one faith can marry the believer of another faith without oppression, and when lion dance is all the more colourful because of the variety of skin colours dancing away, that's when we know that multiculturalism is not just a concept but a celebrated reality, and that we do not merely tolerate but accept and understand and embrace.

As Malaysians, we need to own what belongs to all of us. It is when our identity is based on this holistic ownership and on justice and truth, and when we are all dancing the *zapin* that, maybe, we can celebrate Malaysia in 50 years.

(This article appeared in the Sun Merdeka Special of August 30, 2007 under the title *Would You Like To Zapin With Me?*)

Photographs by Mohamed Talhah Idrus



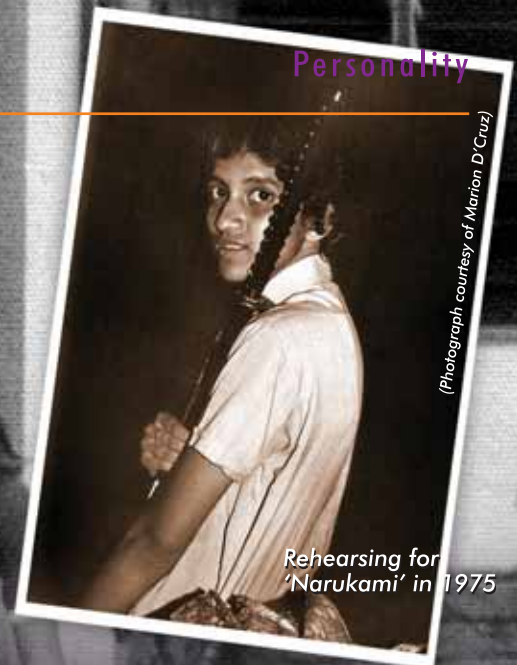
Marion D'Cruz is a dancer, choreographer, teacher and producer. She can be reached at [mariondcruz@yahoo.com](mailto:mariondcruz@yahoo.com)





Rafidah Jalil  
B. Sc. '79

Clockwise from top: Yow Chan, Talhah, Marion, Elizabeth Cardoza, Jeyamala in 1975. The child is Jeyamala's niece (Photograph courtesy of Mohamed Talhah Idrus)



Getting an interview with Marion D'Cruz was not the easiest arrangement. It was not totally due to her busy schedule. Blame it on the KL scene. We are always multi-tasking. Marion teaches in five different colleges, manages her Five-Arts Centre whilst doing various projects. And I was in-between a few projects and coordinating my first wedding event. I shot Marion an e-mail with a list of questions ... no response. I should have known. Marion would not have time to sit down and write down all the answers. We finally decided to do a telephone interview at 8.30am on Thursday. From the moment she said "hello", Marion responded to questions posed with confidence, like a true professional.

Marion's earlier involvement in the performing arts was a 'long and winding road'. She taught English and general paper to survive so that she could pursue in the arts. Without hesitation Marion said, "No, I had never thought of giving up! I started dancing since I was six. It is in my blood! The arts scene has only grown in the last five to ten years. Anne James was a school teacher for many years. Elizabeth Cardoza was with the British Council before she joined Badan Warisan. In the early years the arts scene was limited. Back then I taught English to do Arts. But now I am teaching in the Arts and doing stuff in the Performing Arts."

Marion teaches in several schools, National Arts Academy (ASK), University of Malaya, Sunway College, The One Academy and Lim KokWing University College. At ASK Marion teaches Improvisation to students in Year One while Dance History and Dance Composition to year Two. This semester there is a degree programme in which she teaches Dance History. In University of Malaya Dance Department Marion teaches the Masters students Tari Asia Tenggara (Dance in post colonial Southeast Asia) and Dance Criticism at the undergraduate degree programme. In Sunway College, she teaches Improvisation. In The One Academy she teaches Culture and Society in Malaysia which she has been teaching for eleven years.

Marion is the Executive Producer of Five Arts Centre. The centre, now 25 year-old, is involved in performances and community projects. "We have done community performances in Selayang, Taman Medan. I am like a chicken without a head running around but I am enjoying myself," she responded.

Throughout the conversation, Marion easily rattled off names of artistes whom she has been collaborating with in the performing arts. She is willing to share the stage with fellow artistes. This is quite uncommon as many would use the word 'I' throughout interviews but not Marion. Perhaps her childhood upbringing could have attributed to this. According to Marion "the social consciousness developed at a very early stage of my life, social commentary. Vagrants at door steps was a common feature. I was always surrounded by people. People and relatives came to stay. Dad worked with the Prison Department as a store keeper. We lived next to the prison. We always had extended family. The prisoners came to mow our lawn. No, I was not afraid; there were wardens with guns. Yes, there was a strange lack of fears of prisoners. You don't tell a child to be frightened, he is not".

### *The Tune Remains...*

has done children's theatre production. She was not in the performing Arts. She took Arts as an elective subject!" she exclaimed.

If she could come back as a guest lecturer, Marion would like to focus on choreography.

"I would like to teach choreography to get students to think out of the box in looking at form and content and to continue my journey of creating a vocabulary in Malaysian contemporary dance. I would like to teach Art and Society - a course that might look at the role of art in society ...," she said.

Marion suggested that USM could help bring performing arts to the next level by creating a unique Arts Festival. USM could help with funding or creating a scheme where artists could apply for grants to do projects. USM could initiate interesting projects where artists could engage with the community.

She said, "Create an interesting Penang Arts Festival with Janet Pillai as the festival director. Set up a small team of five people to brainstorm on how USM and the Alumni can help the arts".

Marion's future plans are to carry on with what she does best, perform, teach and see results. "Liquidate my assets and retire. ....no, I have no assets. Go to Bali, sit on the beach and stare at the ocean. I want to carry on, enjoy teaching and see results. At the graduation of ASWARA recently the group put together such great stuff!! The work by them was so far ahead than when I was their age. Their exposure and the environment now encourage this." She acknowledges with excitement.

"Actually I don't have plans. Today work, tomorrow die. Not with extreme recklessness, not with extreme worry", with that note, we ended by saying our goodbyes and promising to catch up for lunch, a promise we have made with a dozen other good friends but have yet to fulfill.

After I hung up I could not help reminisce of the 70s in USM, freedom of expression...panty raids, water bombs, radio USM. The Security was to man the security of campus not to police the students. Durian Valley was for the students to enjoy...70s in USM were the era of creativity and creating our own boundary. As Marion said "the 70s in the USM were nothing less than phenomenal, nothing less than life".



Marion, learning the trade from the master, Dalang Hamzah Awang Mat in 1976 (Photograph courtesy of Marion D'Cruz)

When asked who had a great influence in her artistic creativity, Marion mentioned her family, her ballet teacher, Professor Mohamed Ghouse Nasuruddin and of course her late husband, the renowned Mr Krishen Jit. She said, "During my early years, it was my family - Singing and dancing and of course my ballet teacher. In dancing it is Ghouse. Imagine, a girl coming from Johor Bharu was suddenly exposed to ballet with Malay dance!! Wow, it could be done!! He was breaking rules and mixing stuff. And Krishen, my late husband - Opening of the minds to the unlimited possibility that is Malaysian. The vocabulary and identity that is Malaysian. I have learnt a lot from his theatre....similar patterns, the Malaysian Story. Krishen got me out of the comfortable middle class living. You know, your formative years are from birth to 6 years and from 19 to 25 years; experience in USM during my formative years was nothing less than phenomenal, nothing less than life".

Marion recalled that USM in the 70s were special. The era was special - hot and moving....students' political awareness, demonstration, the strong social awareness.

"In the fine Arts we had a range of teachings; teachers who are movers and shakers. It was engaging with creativity. Learning heritage, empowering and history. Social commentary and specific features of that time. I had teachers like Mohamed Ghouse Nasuruddin, Ghulam Sarwar Yousof, Hamzah Awang Mat, Ed Frame, Roger Long, Lim Teck Ghee, and Chandra Muzaffar. These were special times where it gave you the opportunity of broadening knowledge and expression. Kanaga Sabapathi ... one of the really extra ordinary people who taught us. Khoo Kay Jin from School of Social Sciences, Tone Brulin, Robert Crock, Redza Piyadasa from Centre of Fine Arts - many are still the movers and the shakers today!

"Personally, the programme during that time and the involvement with such people who had strong political and social consciousness was a phenomenal experience."

"The seventies batch was connected to the people and social issues. It was just beyond the world of arts. Elizabeth now is the Executive Director of Badan Warisan. Janet



Rafidah Jalil currently heads her firm, RAE Marketing Consultants, Kuala Lumpur. She can be reached at [jalil\\_rafidah@yahoo.com](mailto:jalil_rafidah@yahoo.com)

# Housing, Building & Planning 1976

## The Pioneers



**ABDUL HADI ENDUT**  
(Retired Lecturer,  
School of HBP, USM)



**AHMAD ZAKIULFUAD  
YAHYA**  
(Lecturer, School of HBP, USM)



**ANNE YUEN @  
YUEN KAM PENG**



**CHE MUSA  
CHE OMAR**



**CHENG HUNG LIM**



**DENNIS  
KHOO BIN HWA**  
(B. Khoo Architect,  
Kuala Lumpur)



**FANG LEAK @  
FANG CHEN**



**HONG EU YAT**



**KAMARUDDIN  
MOHD NOR**



**KAMARUDIN  
MOHD NOR**  
(Lecturer, Pengajian  
Kejuruteraan Alam Sekitar  
Universiti Malaysia Perlis)



**LEAN CHENG LIAT**



**LIM CHOW WENG**  
(Team 3 Architects,  
Singapore)



**LIM HAK SZE**



**NG WENG CHENG**



**OOI TEIK CHYE**



**SOW KIAM PENG**



**TEE WIK EIN**



**TEH HOCK CHUAN**



**TEOH THIAN SAN**



**WONG SIEW MIN**



**YEE IA HOWE**



**YONG KUAN**

It is almost unimaginable for a person like Salina Zakaria who had been so passionately in love with the stage and traditional dances be thrust into a field of devastation and rotting corpses in Padang (Acheh) after the tsunami of December 2004. As a journalist for Radio and Television Malaysia (RTM) 1, she was there at the scene to do a special report.

“Although a little apprehensive at first, I was glad that I was sent to the ‘front line’ and that is what makes journalism exciting,” she revealed.

Salina, or Sally as she was better known in USM, found a job as a journalist after her graduation and she was required to cover both local and foreign news.

“I also had to report on crime news and undeniably life as a journalist is challenging, interesting and exciting,” Sally said, adding that everyday seemed to be a completely new day with surprises awaiting to be discovered.

# STRETCHING THE LIMITS

Sharifah Darweena Syed  
Ahmad Amir Feisal  
B. Sc. '07



*New houses for Tsunami victims at Padang, Aceh*

*Performing in Ritma Menara, RTM during her student days*

Sally was a Mass Communication graduate, majoring in Journalism and minoring in directing and acting. I was her junior and a room-mate for two years ... that was how I got to know Sally. Most of the time she busied herself attending lectures during the day and once evening, she will attend dancing practice at Dewan Budaya. Her enthusiasm and drive are incredible, recalling how she remained active in university and student community activities even during her final year never cease to amaze me.

She was involved as a sports executive committee member in Desasiswa (Students Residence) Gemilang for three consecutive years since she first set foot into USM and managed to perform well in her studies too.

"I love what I do. Besides actively participating in my students residence's activities, I took part in the Citrawarna performances every year while I also choreographed with my friends," said Sally. Desasiswa Gemilang became a champion for three years in a row.

She loves traditional dancing. She took part in competitions organised by the Institute of Higher Learning for all the public universities on an annual rotational basis and usually her dance group will perform the Zapin dance for USM under Dewan Budaya.

Besides dancing and acting, she also joined *Silat Fatani* (a form of Malay martial arts) and presenting USM for *Seni Solo* category. It was not a waste being a secretary of Rakan Muda Society in USM which exposed her to many challenging activities. She was also a member of the Students Representative Council.

Sally's student activities helped in her career when she graduated. After joining RTM1, she hosted the show *Ops 994* with the Malaysian Fire and Rescue Department, Galeri Sri Perdana and Sukan 2007. For her efforts she received an honorary award from the Department and a certificate of appreciation from PROSTAR, a non-government organisation promoting Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) awareness. She climbed Mount Kinabalu with AIDS patients that same year.

From RTM1 she went on to join TV3 reality show *Olay Total White Aspirasiku (My Aspirations)*, second season which was hosted by singer-actress Amy Mastura.

Stretching The Limits



Sally (right) and friends in Olay Total White **Aspirasiku**



Sally with the crew of drama **Pingat Untuk Mama**



At work with Nas Ahmad



A recent family portrait during Sally's engagement

"My experience in RTM1 gave me much experience. This reality show adopted The Apprentice concept and I have to compete with other participants in order to win the post in TV3," she said. She clinched the third placing but gained much experience from the show.

Having trudged through the exciting field of broadcasting, she still misses being a journalist but does not mind exploring the new fields.

Sally is the co-producer for *Jangan Tidur Lagi* (Do Not Sleep) on TV3 where she worked with the 'big names' such as Mr Azwan Haji Ali who is the programme host and Mr Adlin Aman Ramli. Her experience in choreographing student performances in USM gave her greater confidence in her current working environment in TV3.

"I would like to gain experience in the entertainment field as it requires you to think out of the box," she said.

She said that her present success is hinged on the experiences she had gained at USM and has not regretted joining in the university's activities because it taught her to persevere through challenges.

"My advice is that you try to participate in as many activities in university as you can because it enriches your life with experience," said Sally. "Besides, the experiences will provide you with the confidence to handle problems effectively and also to build a successful career after graduation."

There is no doubt that she walked the talk in pursuing her career, she had gone from dancing on the glitzy stage to the harrowing environment of a disaster zone.

Photographs courtesy of Salina Zakaria



Sharifah Darweena Syed Ahmad Amir Feisal is currently the Assistant Registrar at Alumni Liaison Office, USM. She can be reached at [darweena@notes.usm.my](mailto:darweena@notes.usm.my)

# A place to lepak.

The 70s alumni may remember the places we used to lepak in campus:  
 The steps of Block 10, and those of the library  
 Listening to the songs from the juke box ...  
 in Fu Manchu.

Soon there will be a new place to hang out ...  
 THE place to meet friends  
 A symbol of our pride  
 To be continued by the next generation

We need your support to realise this dream  
 We are confident USM alumni can make things happen

Please contribute generously

It's US!

Sincerely  


Associate Professor Mohammed Tahaah Idrus  
 Chief Editor  
 'The Leader'

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*Text and Photographs by  
Mohamed Talhah Idrus  
B. Soc. Sc. '74*

# Dragons & Damse



*The beginning of autumn  
Decided  
By the red dragonfly*

*- Japanese haiku*

**D**ragons have been a fascinating item in romantic literature and modern films. In medieval mythologies, they are often depicted as fire-breathing menacing creatures, dragging many a damsel into distressing situations. They have been a popular object of folk-lore since about 3000 years ago. Even one of the old names of Japan used to be *Akitsu Shima* (Island of Dragonflies).

In the real animal kingdom, there is another dragon-and-damsel story, one in which both the damsel and the dragon live harmoniously ever after. I am talking about two other residents of our USM environment.

Dragons and Damsels



A damselfly can snatch an insect in split seconds

Unlike in movie-land, both these dragons and damsels contribute to human well-being. They are commonly known as dragonflies and damselflies (male damselflies are also damselflies!), belonging to the order of *odonata*. Locals call them *pepatung* (literally akin to wooden sculptured images), maybe because of their motionless modes of resting. The people of the states of Kelantan and Terengganu call them *puting beliung* (hurricanes) because of their speed and erratic flights.



The dragonfly head houses the huge compound eyes and the 'mechanical' jaws



They are small, yet beautifully ferocious and fierce hunters. Their perfectly armoured bodies, segmented abdomens, menacing heads and transparent wings make them truly artistic gems.

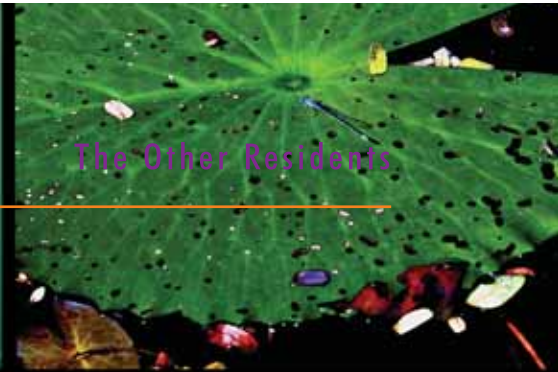


The head is especially fascinating. The huge compound eyes, the jolly-Roger face and bristled jaw that drops and open like mechanical hinges, the head makes an intimidating image. Little wonder that they were once referred to by demonic names like 'the devil's darning needle', and 'the devil's riding horses', etc. I wonder if the faces of the aliens in films like *The Alien* and *The Predator* are actually fashioned after their heads.

Despite their ferocities dragonflies often become prey to birds, like the fantail magpie (top left), as well as to insects, like the water-skaters (bottom left)



*Dragons and Damsels*



*The Other Residents*

*Streams, man-made lakes and wetland patches in the Minden campus are prime habitats of the odonata*

There are about 230 species of dragonflies and damselflies in West Malaysia, which make waterlogged areas their ideal habitats.

In the Minden campus, less than 10% of the species can be seen, usually confined to the streams, man-made lakes and wetland patches pocketed in the campus. Among these are the streams near the nursery area of Desasiswa Cahaya Gemilang, between the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences and Desasiswa Indah Kembara, and the lake fringes. Fewer species are found in the open fields like the coconut grove between HBP and the Gymnasium, which host a number of species. Sadly, these habitats also attract constant 'development'.

The low species count is however compensated by the abundant number of each species. Their brilliant colours make their presence seem common.

When seen, their appearance is eye-catching, especially when the sun exploits their shimmering colours, rendering their transparent wings a magnificent shine, transforming their eyes into glass marbles, momentarily giving them illusions of dancing gems amid the 'duller' greeneries.

Between the two 'flies', the dragon is thicker and more noticeable through its inconsistent flight path and outstretched wings when perching. On the other hand, the damselfly, as hinted by its name is slender and dainty, tucking in its wing when perching.

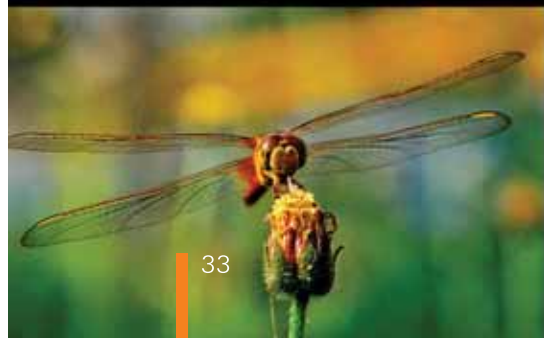


*Damselfly with wings tucked to its sides while perching*



*A dragonfly with shiny wings spread out basking motionless like a sculpture*

*Dragonflies perch with wings outstretched, staring through their spherical eyes*





A sample of damselflies found in the Minden campus



The coconut grove is also a habitat for some species of the *odonata*

Minden campus has been most encouraging in providing habitats for *odonata* as well as numerous other residents.

The habitats hold much potential for research besides acting as outdoor laboratories for dragons-and-damsels observation. Sensitive management of these spaces are crucial for the continuity of the *odonata*, as well as to encourage biodiversity within the shrinking greenery in the Minden campus.



A sample of dragonflies seen in the Minden campus



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Stadium

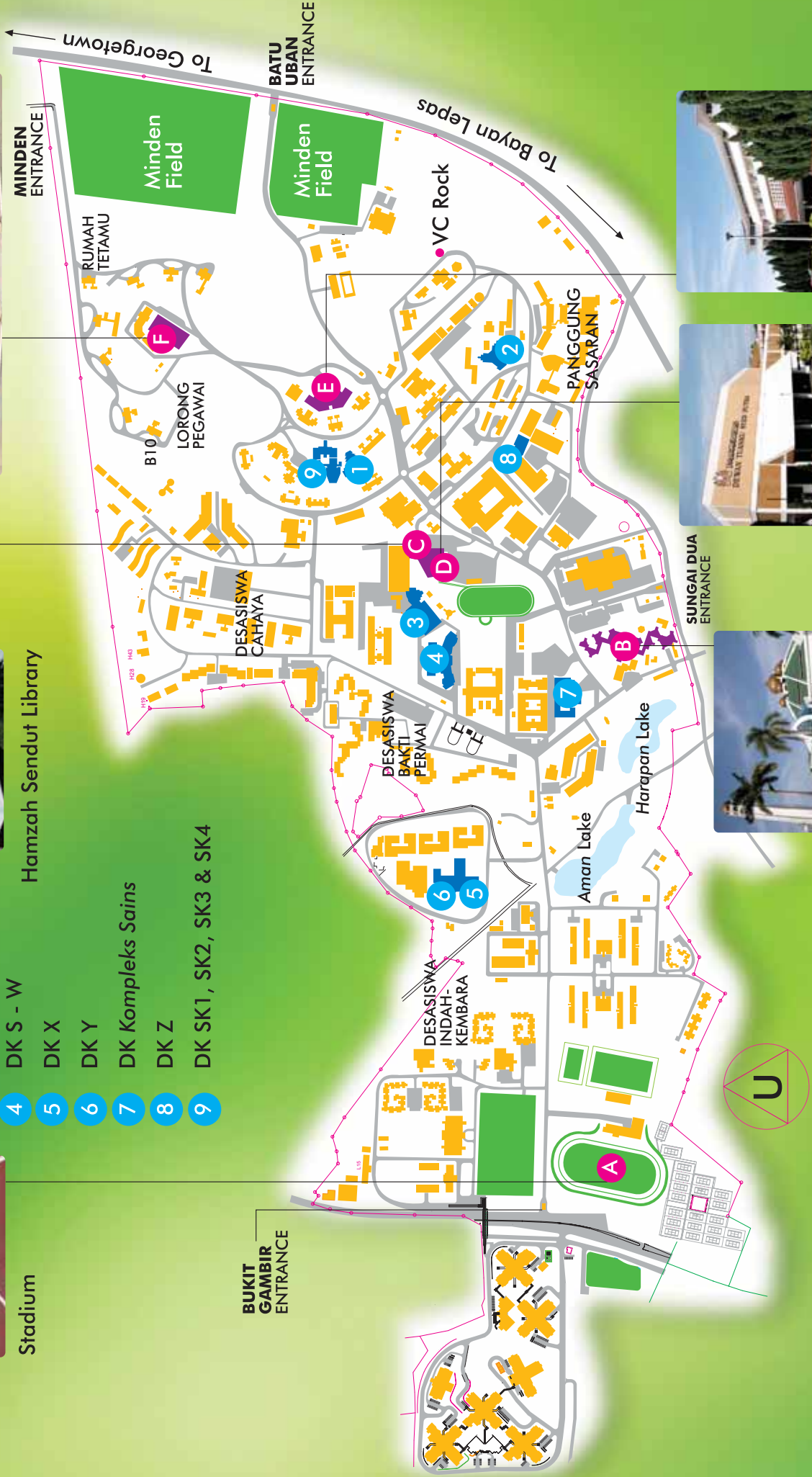
Lecture Theatres (DK)

- 1 DK A, B & C
- 2 DK D, E & F
- 3 DK G - R
- 4 DK S - W
- 5 DK X
- 6 DK Y
- 7 DK Kompleks Sains
- 8 DK Z
- 9 DK SK1, SK2, SK3 & SK4



Hamzah Sendut Library

Museum and Gallery Tuanku Fauziah



Balai Islam



Dewan Tuanku Syed Putra



Chancellery Building

# NO LEOTARDS *for* ZAIBO

Mohamed Talhah Idrus  
B. Soc. Sc. '74

Yusuf Suid  
B. Comp. Sc. '06

Artwork by Mohamed Talhah Idrus

No Leotards For Zaibo

"I actually wanted to do dancing, but the first time I walked into Sasaran and saw Ghouse in leotards, I totally forgot about dancing". Zaibo stared briefly at us to make sure that we have formed the picture of Dato' Professor Mohamed Ghouse Nasuruddin that forever scared him away from dancing.

"Kita peghak kan daghi kampung (we were really country yokels, weren't we)?" He half-apologised in his northern slang.

Zaibo, real name Zainal Abidin, is recognised by Malaysians as an actor, a funny man to be exact. His image is one of fun. Even his presence can draw smiles.

Yet Zaibo actually started out as a dancer, of course never in leotards. He danced in school and joined community groups. He was initially trained by Cikgu Baha (Baharuddin), who later joined USM as a Cultural Officer.



Zaibo in leotards while with 'Under One Roof' (Photograph courtesy of Zaibo)

His talents were noticed by many, making his early career easy and profitable. Among others, Linda Chong, a USM alumna, introduced Zaibo to Malaysian audience via cameo appearances in her *Jangan Ketawa* sitcom. But it was the Singapore TV series *Under One Roof* that propelled Zaibo into wider media attention.

Just as few know of his roots in dancing, many be equally unaware of his serious side. The contemplative Zaibo always emerges each time he expresses his gratitude to his alma mater.

"The whole campus was a teacher", Zaibo philosophises. To him lessons of life was learnt while in USM; lessons of hardship and struggle, of friendship and jealousies, of struggles and challenges. He even remembers having rude jolts of reminders of how a little power can turn officers into insensitive beings.

One painful case to him was when a student who had just cooked rice (a dormitory offence) for his friends was caught red-handed by the authority and had the pot of rice confiscated. When the rest of the *Geng Periuk* (literally 'the rice-pot gang') came back with dishes to go with the rice, they found no rice to eat! Zaibo recalls the casual nature of the cook, "kena rampas sekali dengan periuk (it was confiscated with the pot)!"



During his practical training in 1987, Zaibo (right) landed his first TV role (Photograph courtesy of Zaibo)



Zaibo (second right) was the star of 'Spanar Jaya', a popular Malaysian sitcom (Photograph courtesy of Zaibo)

Practising a play in the midst of a shopping complex in Georgetown, Pulau Pinang when he was a student (Photograph courtesy of Zaibo)

### No Leotards For Zaibo

Despite the cook's casualness, Zaibo is still sympathetic with the students. "These poor kids were only trying to fill up their tummies before rushing off to class again. They (the officers) could have considered that even if they wanted to take action. Imagine those boys going to class with their stomachs empty", he opened, his eyes staring into nothing.

It was such events that made the whole campus environment the real teacher for Zaibo; the facets and episodes of campus life was his course content. The formal classes are only part of the total learning process.

In his seriousness he was contagious. You are drawn to his story and empathise with his emotions.

But philosophical indulgences are usually short-lived. All of a sudden his hands would be flailing, to demonstrate a totally different scenario. It is difficult to concentrate with Zaibo. While you are keeping up with his seriousness regarding an issue, he would suddenly explode in humorous imitations of friends and scenes passed.

Flowers from an admirer to Zaibo after one of his performances in USM (Photograph courtesy of Zaibo)

*"He was caught with the pot in his hands."*



Zulkifli addressing Zaibo (second right) and the crew of the bangsawan 'Puteri Salasih' staged in 2002 for the Alumni programme 'Sirih Pulang Ke Ganggang' (Photograph courtesy of Zaibo)



We asked him about how the name "Zaibo" came about? "Ni kerja Ghouse (Nasaruddin) and Zainal Latiff la ni (This was the doings of Ghouse and Zainal Latiff)" he stiffened up. "You know la, that time I was still handsome..." he gently combed his hand over his bald head. Thus was the Zaibo way of explaining that the 'bo' suffixed to part of his first name is short for 'botak' (bald) that made him a conspicuous character among the students. Of course this diverted to more stories of his student days.

(Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus)



### No Leotards For Zaibo

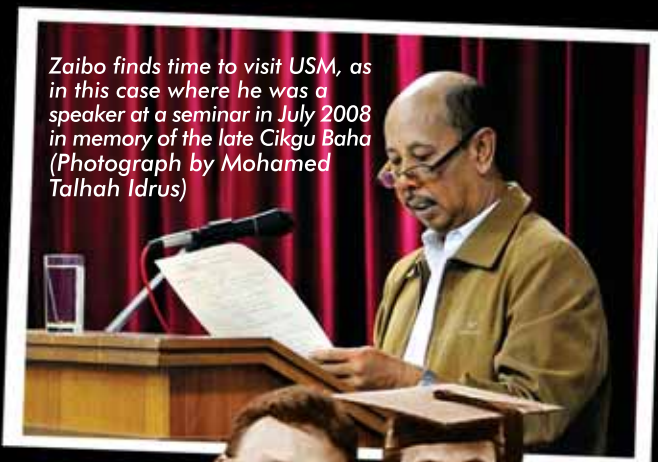
Reflecting on his present situation he is equally philosophical. "Life is a cycle. In the world of entertainment, you have to be aware of one thing; you are at the top only for a while. As you get older, younger actors will draw public attention, and you will have to be contented with minor roles befitting your age. It will happen to every famous actor and singer". He said with surprising calmness, and he seems to be genuinely at peace with this reality.

When we met him again a few weeks later, he was on a set for a 'Eid al-Fitr show produced by Malaysian and Bruneian television stations. Though most of the other actors and actresses are from the younger set, Zaibo was again at ease with them.

Despite the busy schedule he still made efforts to play host to his fellow alumni visitors. Though we felt somewhat intrusive, Zaibo, the compassionate



Finding time to be with Sharifah Darweena (left) from **The Leader** (Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus)

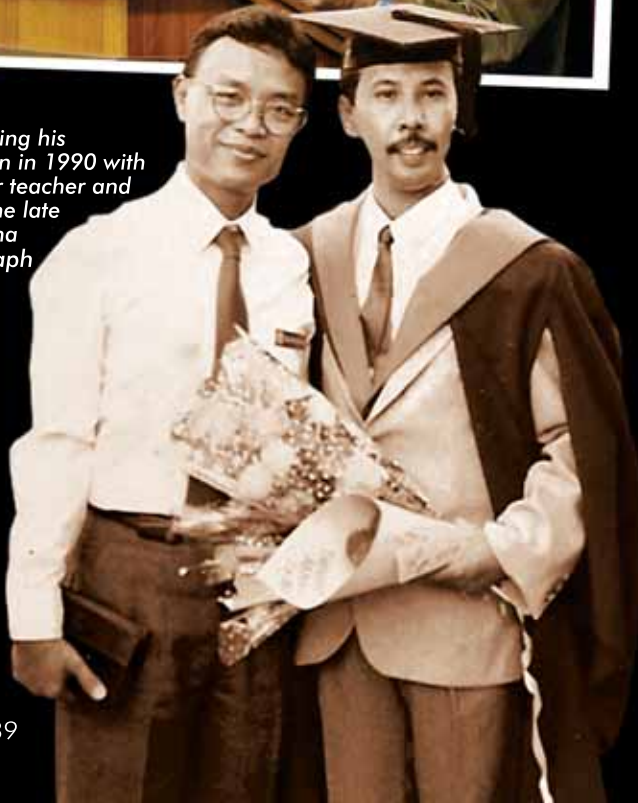


Zaibo finds time to visit USM, as in this case where he was a speaker at a seminar in July 2008 in memory of the late Cikgu Baha (Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus)

comedian, made conscious efforts to put us at ease. He even insisted that we have lunch with them.

I wondered if lessons learnt during his student days influenced the invitation. Could it be that this time he wanted to be sure that this *Geng Periuk* does not go off hungry like his former dorm-mates?. Maybe Zaibo is silently insinuating that getting into leotards does not prepare a performer for life, that it is how one fills the heart with lessons of life that does it.

Zaibo during his graduation in 1990 with his former teacher and mentor, the late Cikgu Baha (Photograph courtesy of Zaibo)



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Artwork by Rusly Jamaludin

Sharifah Munirah Syed Mohamed  
B. Soc. Sc. '74

Yong Check Yoon

# DR ACTOR

What you see of Associate Professor Abdul Samat Salleh today belies what he was when young. His image was worthy enough to earn him the nickname *Si Gondrong* given by his course mates. It was an unmistakable image of a young rugged, hero sporting long hair that would billow at the slightest breeze. The nickname took after the Javanese epic hero whose popularity was considered the rage back then.

Now Samat *Si Gondrong* has mellowed over the years. Gone is his 'rebel' image. Being the country's only known PhD holder in acting, his casual appearance deceptively belies his talents. His humility and humour have kept him looking much younger than his 60-odd years.

Dr Actor

Samat and his coursemates during his student days (Photograph courtesy of Samat)



Samat is a lecturer in performing arts in the Arts Centre since 1984. Although a lecturer by profession, he is also a part-time actor having acted in many television dramas as well as in theatre.

“One of the most popular television drama that I have acted in was *Pukul Dua Petang* (2:00 PM) produced by NTV7 and directed by the late Mr Hani Mohsein,” he said, adding that the payment then was paltry but the actors were more than compensated by gaining exposure and experience acting in television.

The other popular drama that he acted in was *Angin Sepi Ke Kota London* (Lonely Winds to London City) which also has received a high rating among the viewers. Samat was also offered to act in theatres and the one that he enjoyed most was *Anak Tanjung* (Child of Tanjung). Besides acting he had also tried his hands in directing stage dramas such as *Bakawali* and *Pak Tua*.

Samat in his office with USM students (Photograph courtesy of Zaibo)



Samat’s involvement in performing arts was mere coincidence. He was a teacher when he applied to pursue his studies in USM and planned to major in history or literature so that he can return to teaching. However, circumstances dictated otherwise and his plans became different.

“When I came back in the second year, the quota for history and literature were full,” said Samat. “I then consulted Dr Mohamed Ghouse Nasruddin, a lecturer in performing arts (now Professor Dato’) and he encouraged me to do performing arts instead.”

The reason why he chose performing arts was that his friends - Mr Hatta Azad Khan, Mr Hamdan Sulaiman, Mr Sapparman Bakri, Ms Marion D’Cruz and Ms Elizabeth Cardoza - were in it and these people, Samat included, went on to carve niches in the country’s performing arts industry.



The play ‘Imbas’ directed by Samat as played in Sasaran (Photograph courtesy of Zaibo)

Dr Actor

*Samat is versatile on screen and on stage  
(Photograph courtesy of Samat)*

Reflecting on his student days, he said that the education system then was quite liberal and that encouraged students to be creative as there were no constraining rules and regulations such as Universities and University Colleges Act (AUKU).

There were quite a number of dramas produced at that time and one that he particularly recalled was *Bujur Lalu Melintang Patah* directed by Mr Mustapha Kamal Yassin (pen-name Kala Dewata). The drama on *adat* Minangkabau was taken on a roadshow from Pulau Pinang right up to Kuala Pilah in Negri Sembilan. To promote the performing arts among the young, they also conducted children's theatre and performed in schools all over Pulau Pinang.

The 1970s were the peak of student activism in Malaysian universities. According to Samat he took part in the students' demonstration in 1974 'just for the fun of it' and he was thrilled when he related the events that took place then.

After graduating from USM, he went back to teaching briefly and was offered the Academic Staff Training Scheme at USM to read for his Masters degree in University of Indiana, USA. He then completed his PhD in USM in 1996.

When asked on the potential of the performing arts students in USM, Samat lamented that the students now lacked dedication and commitment compared to the students during his time.

"They are very individualistic and there is no team spirit among them," he said. "It is very sad."

A few years back, the school had students doing certificate programme in music, fine arts and theatre and they are the feeder to the performing arts degree programme. These students were very good because they were very interested and passionate in their work. It produced personalities like Mr Zaibo, Dato' Ahmad Tarmimi Siregar and many others who are industry icons now.

"One of the major challenges the school is facing is how to change the mentality and attitude of the students now," said Samat, adding that "They do not have the passion, understanding of one another and also tolerance which are essential ingredients in the success of performing arts."

Samat sees the potential of students to have the drive, interest and creativity as those in yesteryears. It is because that there is no difference between then and now just that the students must be prepared to unshackle their thoughts, take up challenges and express themselves creatively.

*Photographs courtesy of Abdul Samat Salleh*



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It was a silence, so thick that you can cut through it with a knife, despite having a large audience watching the *dikir barat* performance. Then, a sole voice punctuated the deafening silence with an introduction song in the Kelantanese dialect. The crowd continued to be mesmerized.

*Hai Assalamualaiko ... USM Pulau Penang ...  
Tepak betuoh tanah subo ... Apa kabar bumi Minden ...*

*Hai nok pekenalké diri ... Sebelum ambo cerito panje ...  
Ini dio Ezeri ... Tuke Karut dari Mache ...*

*(Hi Assalamualaikum ... Penang USM...  
A place that is fortunate, a place that is flourishing ...  
How do you do Minden?)*

*Hi, I will be introducing myself ... Before this humble  
servant (a term of politeness) starts a long story ...  
I am he, Ezeri ... tukang karut from Machang ...)*

It does not need one to understand the Kelantanese Malay dialect for, as what the 19th century American poet Mr Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once said, "Music is the universal language of mankind".

Mr Ezeri Ismail, assuming the role of a *tukang karut* who is one of the two frontmen, then proceeded to churn out rhythmic lyrics based on a topic, usually pertaining to a social issue.

The *tukang karut* sitting cross-legged with the rest of his team of *awok-awoks* responded in a similar rhythmic fashion but with their bodies swaying and hands clapping in unison to the tune of the percussion instruments. In *dikir barat* the *tok jogho* (or *juara*) is the leader whose responsibility is to 'create songs that are poetic or a language that has a rhythm'.

The *tukang karut* interacts with the audience using his wit and his performance is gauged by how engaging he is while the *tok jogho* needs to have a good voice. These lively exchanges are accompanied by percussion instruments comprising *gendang ibu* (bass drum), *gendang anak* (lead drum), *tetawak* (gongs hanging from a frame), *maracas*, *canang* (a member of the small gong), tambourine, and *kesi* (cymbals).



Sharifah Darweena Syed  
Ahmad Amir Feisal  
B. Sc. '07

# Ezeri's Dance

SHOWTIME

SEPTEMBER 19, 2004



## Dikir barat rap

Students sing fresh rhythms into *dikir barat*, leaving SITI HAJAR ABD AZIZ rockin' for more.

COMBINE traditional musical instruments, a guitar, the sound of clapping hands and Kelantanese accents, and what do you get? *Dikir barat* rap. Maybe "rap" is a bit much, although that was what it sounded like. But the group of students who call themselves "Raja Budak" ... that it was a *dikir barat* ...

20-year-old Mohd Azri Ismail, looked a little shy but later proved he was no ordinary kid on the block. He was also the *tukang karut* (lead singer-cum-storyteller) in the *wayang kulit* segment, which kicked off the concert.

Speaking in hard Kelantanese accent, the characters Said and Samad discussed the girls they admired on campus. It may have been difficult to follow but the students quickly ...

Kelantan for Raja Budak's Aladdin Moh cartoonist ... taking his d USM's Fazu He said ... founded, b two years represent several ... "We ar dikir-bar ... "Who ... modern attract

## Ezeri's Dance

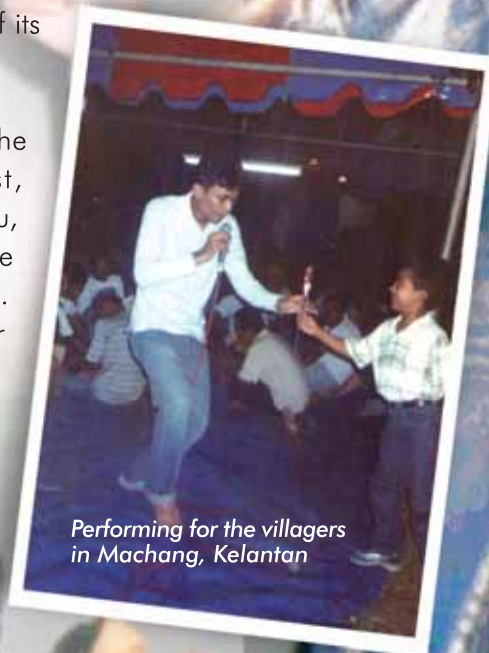
He explained that *dikir barat* is one of the traditional night entertainments of the Kelantanese and like *wayang kulit* (shadow play), *makyong* and *menora*, the dance comes under a category of its own.

*Dikir barat* is very popular among the communities on the East Coast, particularly in Kelantan and Terengganu, and tickets are usually sold to off set the cost of engaging a *dikir barat* group. Otherwise, the group would be paid for performing at a function such as a wedding feast. The payment varies considerably but normally a *tok jogho* receives RM100; a *tukang karut*, RM150 because of his skills in composing lyrics impromptu; and the rest of the group get a lump sum of RM300 to be shared out among the members.

During his three years with USM, Ezeri and his group, Raja Budak, had performed with AF1 group in the Jitra Hall in Kedah in conjunction with the National Drugs Colloquium 2003 and took part in a celebration of poet Ms Zurainah Hassan's acceptance of Sea Write Award the following year. Ezeri is now a marketing consultant who graduated from the School of Humanities (History) in 2006.

"When I enrolled at USM in 2003, there were two *dikir barat* groups: the Himpunan Anak-Anak Kelantan (HAAK) and the Kumpulan Abe Lanun," said Ezeri. Subsequently a group of the new batch of Kelantanese students staying at Desasiswa Gemilang then formed Raja Budak.

The idea of forming Raja Budak was first mooted by Aladin Mamat who later assumed the position of a *tok jagho* and Ezeri became the *tukang karut*. The *gendang ibu* was played by Ibzaiki. The group rapidly rose to prominence, being invited to perform and participate in competitions.



Performing for the villagers in Machang, Kelantan



Campus Life

Ezeri's Dance

## The latest boy band

**AWAK-AWAK:** The USM team Naga Mutiara in action. Michel Zareal is left. — Picture by Felix Iwanli

**BY SITI HAJAR ABD-AZIZ**

**T**HE name "Naga Mutiara" may not sound like a boy band. But boy, it is surprising. Even when the Naga Mutiara performed at the Naga Mutiara Competition of Naga Mutiara (Naga Mutiara Competition) in the competition, the judges' attention had slipped off just before he left the stage.

It is quite difficult to catch the actual lyrics as most of the songs were sung in Kelantanese but a few groups did weave in standard Malay language in their songs.

The *dikir barat* competition is jointly organised by the USM's Himpunan Anak-Anak Kelantan (HAK), the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage and the USM's Student Affairs and Development Unit.

The competition is organised annually for students of public universities and public colleges.

Ezeri with Abe Mi (one of his awak2) during the interview

"I adopted Hindustani songs such as *Kaho Na Pyar Hai, Hum Hum Sath Hai* into *dikir barat* and danced the *joget* to engage the audience," he said. The other element that the group introduced was the interspersing of jokes in the songs.

Although there were three groups of *dikir barat* in USM, they competed sportingly among themselves but once when they are competing outside the university, they cooperate with the common objective of bringing fame and reputation to USM. Eventually the three groups merged and took the name Naga Mutiara after clinching the champion of Inter-Universities Dikir Barat Competition for the Academic Year 2004/05 and Ezeri won the Best *Tukang Karut* award.

"My interest in *dikir barat* started when I was still in primary school and over the years I have the good fortune to be guided by renowned *dikir barat* masters such as Tuan Kob Raja Saring, the late Cikgu Naim, Pokku Kamal, Meli Mahligai dan Jemi Bukit Marak," said Ezeri.

"Before the dance was popularised by Radio and Television Malaysia (RTM) as a competition, the performers would traditionally sit in a circle in village performances but for public performance, the dancers had to sit in rows, facing the audience," explained Ezeri.

It is believed that *dikir barat* originated in the state of Cik Siti Wan Kembang in the forties but it took another 20 to 30 years for it to gain prominence, added Ezeri. Even then it was already been a popular late evening entertainment in Kelantan, particularly among the peasants who had returned from work.

In early days, *dikir barat* was known as *dikir karut*. The term was coined by Mr Salleh or better known as Pak Leh Tape. The name of the dance *dikir barat* came much later and among the highly respected performers were Mr Arifin Ana, Mr Daud Bukit Abal, Mr Seman Wau Bulan and Mr Husin Gelang Mas.

The *dikir barat* fever also caught on in Thailand in the seventies and it produced well known male performers that included Mat Yeh, Ku Mat, Sudin, Sudin Kecil and Deraman Anak Keli there.

"The current form that we see is the modernised version such as with the introduction of the guitar and the drum," said Ezeri. The personalities who are responsible for its transformation include Cikgu Sulizi, Mr Halim Yazid and Mr Zaidi Buluh Perindu.

Often *dikir barat* in the community is established and managed by sponsors or by the generosity of local leaders like elected representatives or village headmen.

Leaving USM after graduation did not cause Ezeri to leave his quest to promote *dikir barat*. When *The Leader* met in Kuala Lumpur recently, I was pleasantly surprised to find him still having the insatiable enthusiasm when the topic is raised as they had five years ago. Perhaps *dikir barat* can be promoted one day on a regional platform since it is a dance that embodies the voice of the masses.

Photographs courtesy of Ezeri Ismail



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Young musicians on traditional instruments



# the ROADS are their STAGE

*but*

Nor Rafizah Md. Zain



Entrance of a fortune teller in 'Ayam Jantan Ayam Betina' 2005, Pusat Belia, Lebuh Aceh

Steered away from conventionality, interested residents of a community are given the opportunity to be involved in plays that they can plan on their own whilst the stories are about the community itself. This concept is promoted by Liyana Pillai Abdullah aka Janet Pillai, a lecturer in Drama and Theatre in the USM School of Arts. It is well received by the various communities that her organization has been working with.

"One such show was 'My BALIK pulau' and it was about the life in Balik Pulau. It was dedicated to the community in Balik Pulau and was performed in Balik Pulau itself," said Janet.



Backstage view of 'Ronggeng Merdeka' 2007



*The Roads Are But Their Stage*

To her, these plays are unique in the sense that they were not performed on well decorated stages or air-conditioned halls but on streets, public fields and in kampongs. Based on the audience's opinions and suggestions, some of plays were performed spontaneously.

Janet believes that the performing arts is a medium of communication and the people who learn it become a 'creative intellectual capital'. Children are found to be very independent, creative, and brave. "They are very innovative and make use of their experiences and knowledge to generate storylines," she said.

There are two performing groups in Arts Ed, an organisation Janet established. One of the two is Anak-Anak Kota which has been actively performing around the Armenian Street enclave. She said that the organisation does not charge the audience for watching the performances. However, it obtains sponsorship from private companies, government sector and USM also plays its role in community development by bringing in experts and students to advise or facilitate the production.

She also revealed that for creating a story, the performers are required to conduct their own research. Since the story is usually related to the community in which they live, performers have to interview residents. It is through this process that they learn about their own identity and how to appreciate who they are. Indeed, if we watch the performances, we hear the performers speaking in their own dialects besides English and Malay. For Janet, the success of community empowerment through performing arts is a home run all the way.

Janet, the Director of Arts Ed Organisation, has been working with children to inculcate the love of performing arts in them for many years. Her love for the arts has inspired her to form this organisation dedicated towards teaching performing arts to children aged between 12 and 23. In this organisation, she and her colleagues conduct workshops in acting, singing, dancing, playing musical instruments and visual arts.

"Children and teenagers are very talented and we need to provide them the opportunity to express themselves," she said, adding that they have performed remarkably in theatres such as 'Ayam Jantan Ayam Betina', 'Heritage Heboh', 'Stop, Look, Go!' and 'Ronggeng Merdeka'.

*Photographs courtesy of Arts Ed Organisation, Pulau Pinang*



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Background: child actors in 'Ronggeng Merdeka' 2007

# Gems of my Memory

Artwork by Rusly Jamaludin

Anne James  
B. A. Ed. '79



(Photograph courtesy of Anne James)

Looking back upon my days at the Universiti Sains Malaysia in the '70s is like looking at another era. I enrolled at USM as a 'freshwoman' in 1975, after the student protests of 1974. I arrived at the campus oblivious to the aftermath; I was more absorbed in the liberating experience of escape from home.

My parents 'delivered' me to campus and I was assigned Block 307 in Desasiswa (Student Village) C. My room was on the top floor. My roommate was a young Malay woman. (During my four years on campus all my roommates were *Bumiputeras* (Sons of the Soil) - three Malays and one Sarawakian). The campus policy then was to assign two people of different ethnicities (usually a Malay with a non-Malay) to a room.

"Freshie, come here."

It was Orientation Week and we had hell to pay.

We wore caps and name tags and were like sitting ducks in a shooting range. It was perilous to walk alone. Like young chicks we flocked in small groups. We perambulated from orientation lectures to singing sessions where we learnt songs like *Barisan Siswa* (Line-up of Undergraduates) to inter-block games, cheerleading sessions and rehearsals. All the while we tried to be unobtrusive so as not to catch the eye of marauding Seniors. The name of the game was not to get caught! But the unwary were invariably waylaid when least expected. Along quiet tree-lined roads and paths, voices screeched like eerie ghosts from under shady trees or from pitch black darkness as we hurried back to the safety of our blocks after late night singing and marching sessions. Very few freshies escaped and many of us often wondered if we would survive the shouting, the screaming and the humiliation.

Freshies of 1975 in a costume walking race during Orientation Week  
(Photograph courtesy of Anne James)

Gems of My Memory



What I remember quite clearly were the sporting events, performances, panty raids and the water fights which do not happen anymore. One very quiet night, soon after orientation, I was in my room when the boys from the surrounding blocks 'attacked' the girls' blocks. The screaming from the floors below alerted me and I quickly locked the door, switched off the lights. Someone tried the door. I remained as quiet as a mouse. As soon as things have quietened down, I stepped out into the corridor to check if the coast was clear. I immediately spotted one of my chief tormentors during orientation. At the same time, my friend, Yvette, stepped out of her room at the far end of the corridor. Screaming a war cry, (the man's name), we herded him into the bathroom. After a couple of times chasing him around the shower cubicles we managed to shove him under a shower and turn on the water. Revenge was sweet!

There was a fancy dress walkathon with prizes for the first to reach the finishing post and for best costume. Janet Pillai and I decided to go as Siamese twins. A single sarong, some face paint and a hair dryer did the trick. We won 'Best Costume'. To cap that, I was one of the top three winners in the women's section of the walkathon.

In the final days of Orientation Week we had inter-Desasiswa matches with accompanying cheer leading teams, a Malam Joget (Traditional Dance Night) when seniors and freshies danced the joget on a basketball court and a final night of performances when freshies showed off their talents. That week of terrifying 'orientation' ended in a glorious festival of dancing, drinking and camaraderie.

## Minden Memories

It was also on the final night of the Orientation Week, after I had done a free flowing improvised dance sequence, that I was approached by Kee Thuan Chye to act in his next play *Rhinoceros*. At that point I had no idea USM had a Performing Arts programme. It was a transformative moment; the start of my involvement in Theatre. My co-actors were Elizabeth Cardoso and Gopinath Nagarath. The performance was reviewed by Mr Krishen Jit (who wrote under the pseudonym Utih) for the Straits Times (I had no idea who he was!) and I got my first 'rave' review. By second year I had decided to major in Performing Arts. As a result, for the next three years I practically lived in the Sasaran; the performance space for the theatre students of the Performing Arts programme.

The Sasaran was a hot-spot where shows were put on every semester. Kee Thuan Chye, who was actually from the Literature Section, directed his own plays and the big hit Kabuki play, *Narukami*. When the Australian lecturer, Dr Helen Van der Poorten, joined the Section she did plays translated into Malay, like *Play by Beckett* and probably the first on-site performance in Penang of *Hamlet*, at Fort Cornwallis.

In the meantime I joined the USM dance troupe headed by Dr Mohamed Ghouse Nasuruddin who was doing ground-breaking work in dance, with shows like *Di-Manakah Pusaka Ku*. Dr Ghulam Sarwar aided by Pat Matusky and *Dalang* (puppeteer) Hamzah started the first ever *Practical Wayang Kulit* (shadow play) class in a local university. The all-women's class performed the first ever amateur *Wayang Kulit* performance in a university with two women *Dalangs* (Marion D'Cruz and Angela Tan)!

The cast of *Narukami* staged in Sasaran, 1976  
(Photograph courtesy of Anne James)



Anne (right) and Janet Pillai providing the background music for *wayang kulit* in 1976 (Photograph courtesy of Marion D'Cruz)



I was also a member of the USM Choir ably orchestrated by Mr Ed Frame who later formed the 'Small Group' to sing at smaller events. Aside from this, the theatre students aided and abetted by lecturers like Mr Roger Long, organised 'Happenings' (an improvised, informal performance). We dressed in outlandish costumes and make-up and slow-walked through campus, sailed past carrels in the library and rolled down slopes; while bemused students watched us in horror and wonder. Those were indeed heady days when we could do just about anything on campus (within reason, of course). This was a time when we were allowed to experiment, try out new and outlandish ideas and find out who we were as individuals and as a collective group. Learning and the quest for knowledge did not begin and end in the lecture theatre. It was a continuous process and we were challenged to live it out in the real world. It was all part and parcel of the USM experience. It was no dead zone.

In those days you could buy beer on campus at the restaurant adjacent to the swimming pool. Did some students get drunk! Excessive drinking was not approved of but it happened. The other 'popular' canteen was known as the 'Fu Manchu' (the owner sported a beard similar to that of the movie character Fu Manchu) which served Chinese food.

## Minden Memories

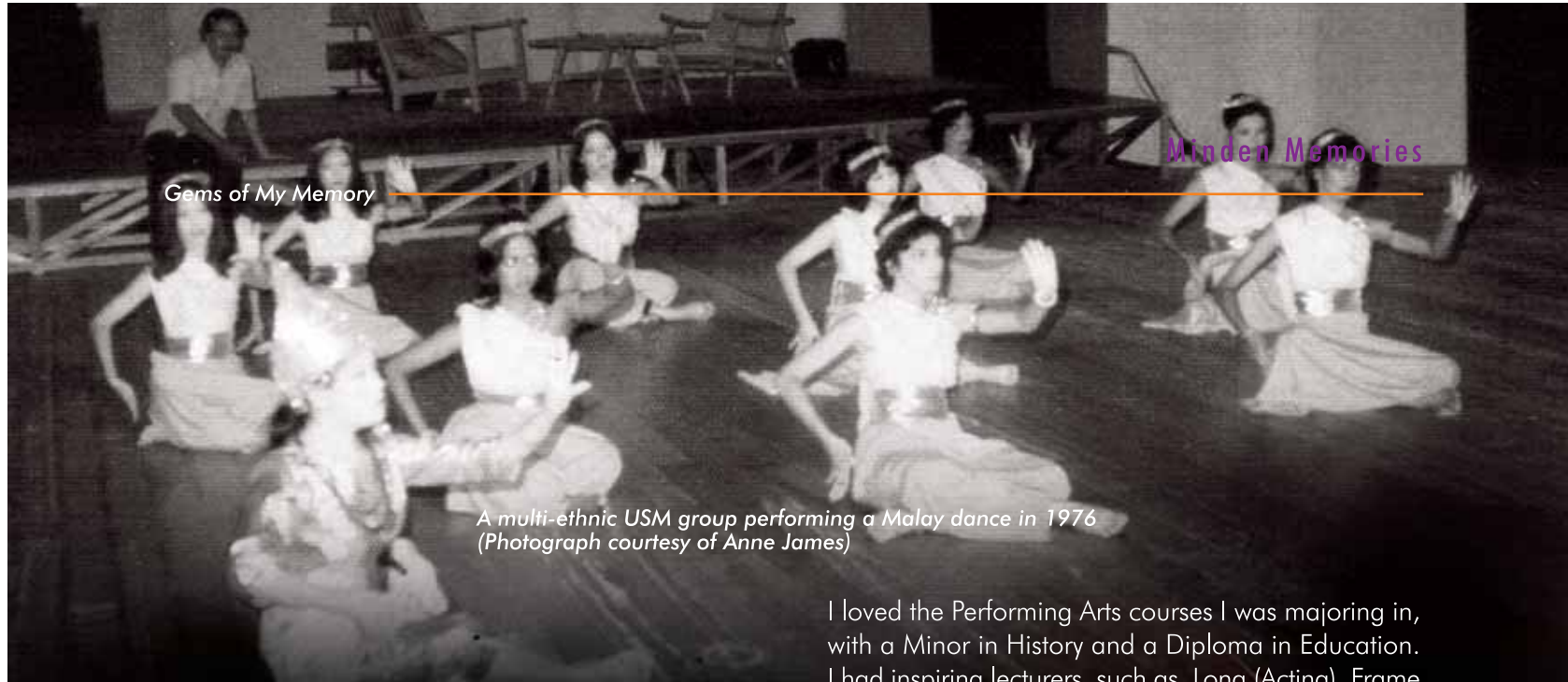
### Gems of My Memory

However, my gang and I usually hung out at, what was commonly known, as the Staff Canteen, (beneath the present office of the School of Social Sciences) where lecturers from the School of Social Sciences and the School of Humanities gathered. We used to spend hours there, in-between lectures or on the way to the library (I often never made it to the library) discussing what we learnt at lectures, talking to lecturers and eavesdropping on lively and heated debates among lecturers.

Those were heady days; I sat thirstily drinking in new theories and ideas by Paulo Freire, Frantz Fanon, Lucy Mair, Artaud, Grotowski and resolved to read Mao's little Red Book, Karl Marx's Das Kapital (available in the 'Red Spot' or Reserved Books' Section of (then) 'the best library in the world'), Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and Peter Brooke's *The Empty Space*. The Social Sciences' faculty taught courses in 'Social Revolution', 'Ethnic Relations' and 'Political Science'. The literature department headed by Mr. Shahnoun Ahmad had students read the works of the colonised not the coloniser. The Performing Arts Section looked at Western and Asian theatre. It was nothing like school and I lapped it up like a dry sponge.



From right to left: Anne, striking a pose with Yvette Xavier, Marion D'Cruz, Elizabeth Cardoza and Swithin Monteiro in lecture theatre A (Photograph courtesy of Marion D'Cruz)



*A multi-ethnic USM group performing a Malay dance in 1976  
(Photograph courtesy of Anne James)*

In 1975, USM was a revolutionary university in more ways than one. Headed by Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Dato' Professor Hamzah Sendut, who had visionary ideas about creating a university unlike any other in this country he emphasised independence, excellence and critical thought. He hired staff members who were young and dynamic, some of whom had returned after completing their studies with fresh ideas from the West. These lecturers as well as foreign ones, looked at issues in entirely new ways, and that sensibility of being on the verge of new horizons gave the university a pulse and heartbeat that were intoxicating. That same spirit filled the students of USM with a desire to put things right in the country, especially with regards to the poor and the disenfranchised. A revolutionary spirit flamed through the universities of the country in the mid 1970's. Student activists like Bong Selamat and Fatimah Sham roused students to march into the streets and demand redress for farmers in places like Baling, in the northern state of Kedah.

After the student protests of 1974 the University and University Colleges Act of 1971 was amended and implemented with vigour. The government was going to make sure it was never again challenged by the young of this country. You could maybe think about issues but you could not talk publicly about those issues or act on them. The scent of rebellion was still in the air for some time after December 1974 and I had a whiff of it, a mere whiff, but it left its mark.

I loved the Performing Arts courses I was majoring in, with a Minor in History and a Diploma in Education. I had inspiring lecturers, such as, Long (Acting), Frame (Music), Ghulam (Asian Theater; *Wayang Kulit*), Mohd. Ghouse (Dance), Van der Poorten (Acting; Directing; Western Theatre), Mr. Ahmad Omar (*Joget Gamelan*), Dr. Koh Tsu Koon (Education), Dr. Leonard De'Vries (Physical Education), Dr. Michael Vickery, Dr. Lim Teck Ghee and Dr. Paul Kratoska (History) and Mr. Chandra Muzaffar (Malaysian Politics). It was a stellar line-up and I got a stellar education.

Physically USM has changed tremendously. In the '70s it was a university in a beautiful garden of sweeping lawns, large lush trees of flames of the forest and sections of jungle that harboured giant millipedes and centipedes. There was no lake then but we had swathes of secret glades (the Durian Valley) and jungle that lent an air of mystery and mysticism to the campus. No female dared to walk alone to the long-houses of far flung (then) Desasiswa A, because the road wound its way through secondary jungle.

Students hurried past the old Japanese/British ammunition dump near Desasiswa A because the silence of the surroundings gave one goose-bumps. It was reputedly haunted. Most of the buildings of the former Minden army camp, were tree-top -high thus creating an impression of space and lush greenery.

Being in Universiti Sains Malaysia in the 1970's was an amazing experience. It was transformative. I thank god I went to University then and not later or now.



*Anne James is a theatre actor, producer and currently heading ArtisProActif. She can be reached at [rssiva@pc.jaring.my](mailto:rssiva@pc.jaring.my)*

Artwork by Rusly Jamaludin

# THE MUSIC BEHIND SHUTTERED DREAMS

Yong Cheek Yoon  
Rusly Jamaludin

DISPAR AGAM'S "OH! AZIZA" (1973)

Kepa kamu yang jangkit, mala kamu  
Membikin orang jadi gembira  
Senyum kamu yang manis, gigi kamu  
Oh! nona ku Aziza, oh! nona ku

Hidung mu manjong  
Membikin fikiran  
Mamanuh dijilat pada  
Oh! Aziza

Lyrics of P. Ramlee's song, **Oh! Aziza**,  
handcopied by his buddy, Ibrahim Zain

Jangkit muka mu jangkit muka  
Di pandang mata  
Bagai biduan bagai biduan  
Dari surga

Tidur malam terbajang pada kamu  
Membikin hati berputa  
Mendjadi hilang

The lyrics were the window to the composer's thoughts. You can fathom his melancholy in every line; each imbued with sadness, frustration and hopelessness. Even the title of his song screams *Airmata di Kuala Lumpur* (Tears in Kuala Lumpur). The composer was Mr Teuku Zakaria Teuku Nyak Puteh who later took the stage name of P. Ramlee. He did not realise his dream to use the song in his movie but his wife actress and singer Ms Salmah Ismail, better known as Saloma, recorded it soon after his death in 1973.

The lyrics spoke about shattered dreams and metaphorical palaces that turned into cemeteries, which symbolise lost hope, desolation and death; as if he was drifting towards the far end of the spectrum in life. Perhaps the most telling line was 'gelaplah pasti masa hadapan' which can be translated as 'forlorn would the future be'.

### The Music Behind Shattered Dreams

He, too, penned '*zahirku hidup hai batinku mati* (alive is my physical self, dead would my spirit be)' and '*hidup sudah tiada bererti* (no longer has life any meaning)'. His 'heart' did not die in Pulau Pinang or Singapore but rather in Kuala Lumpur.

P. Ramlee would not have written these lyrics two-and-a-half decades before his death because he was brimming with enthusiasm and optimism, always eager to explore new ideas. In fact, it is true that he and his works has inspired many performing artistes of the day and helped changed the landscape of the movie and music industry.

Let us go back to 1 June 1948 to witness the young man with a fairly dark complexion and a mop of curly hair taking to the makeshift stage singing *Azizah*, accompanied by his band Pancharagam Mustika. P. Ramlee, then 19, enthralled the crowd who visited the agricultural show in Bukit Mertajam. He was not aware that Mr B.S. Rajhans, a 45 year-old movie director from Singapore-based Malay Film Productions, was mingling among the audience who milled around the stage. The rest was history ... P. Ramlee was on his meteoric trajectory to fame but with more than a fair share of heartaches and disappointments.

In fact, P Ramlee had already bagged four prizes from singing contests, three of which were organised by Radio Malaya, over a three-year period before B.S. Rajhans spotted him at the performance. Just as his birthday was on the first day of Hari Raya (22 March 1929), he headed down by train to join the Malay Film Productions in Singapore on Hari Raya (8 August 1948) as well. Within two months the first movie *Chinta* in which P. Ramlee starred was released.

The Sungai Pinang that flows behind the house of P. Ramlee's grandmother



P. Ramlee (centre), Ibrahim Zain (right) and an unidentified friend posing at a signpost on the way to a performance. Sungei Udang and Sungei Bakau are located very close to the Pulau Pinang-Perak border



P. Ramlee (extreme left) and his Pancharagam Mustika

"P. Ramlee, however, would return to Pulau Pinang at given opportunities to visit his friends," Mr Ibrahim Zain recalled.

Ibrahim, a retired school teacher, was of the same age as P. Ramlee and he was one of the actors close friends. Though aged 79, Ibrahim vividly remembered the times when P. Ramlee would leisurely row a *sampan* along the Sungai Pinang from his parents house in Kampung Jawa in George Town to his grandmother's house in Caunter Hall (now Jalan P. Ramlee).

The Music Behind Shattered Dreams

From left to right: P. Ramlee with a violin and his 'boys' of the Kumpulan Pancharagam Teruna Sekampung (1947). Manning a camera during a shoot. P. Ramlee deftly bowing a violin. Ibrahim Zain (right) with P. Ramlee (centre) and an unidentified friend (left)



A movie poster of **Seniman Bujang Lapok**



“It was for the fun of it that he chose to row the boat and also because the river was then clean and the view was magnificent,” he explained.

When asked about the mysterious ‘Azizah’ that P. Ramlee crooned about, Ibrahim said that it was a name created solely for the song. There was no Azizah, moreover it was a common name and the song reflects his awakening as a teenager.

“It was in the fifties when he returned to help raise funds for the Malay Teachers Organisations,” he told *The Leader*. Ibrahim added that P. Ramlee has a soft spot for Pulau Pinang.

He also revealed that P. Ramlee was also responsible for popularising the game *sepak raga* in Pulau Pinang and eventually Singapore, too, caught on with the game.

Over the 25 years in the film industry, the prolific P. Ramlee had acted, scripted and directed 66 movies. Over this period, he sang, wrote, composed and performed in more than 350 songs! He also won numerous awards for his contribution to the movie and music industry over the years.

His marriage to actress Ms Junaidah Daeng Harris in 1950 lasted only four years. After divorcing Junaidah, he married Ms Noorizan Mohd Noor and the marriage lasted six years. P. Ramlee married Saloma, on 21 November 1961. Coincidentally, P. Ramlee was also

Saloma’s third husband. Five months earlier Saloma had acted with him for the first time in the movie *Seniman Bujang Lapok* (The Three Bachelors).


Known for her clear and melodious voice, Saloma died at 48, outliving her husband by 10 years. P. Ramlee died from heart problems in 1973. Their marriage lasted 12 years until his premature death. Sadly they had no children from this union and both were laid to rest side-by-side at the Jalan Ampang Muslim Cemetery in Kuala Lumpur. Nevertheless they left behind an astounding legacy for the movie and music industry that remained until today.




### The Music Behind Shattered Dreams



P. Ramlee (second from left) and his friends



Actress Kasma Booty (second from left), P. Ramlee (extreme right) and friends arriving by Malayan Airways to perform for a charity function on 7 May 1952



P. Ramlee led his team Sangga Buana in a **sepak raga** match in Pulau Pinang during the '50s

P. Ramlee was with the Malay Film Productions of Jalan Ampas in Singapore until the completion of his last movie *Tiga Abdul* (Three Abduls) in 1964. On the second week of April he headed for state of Selangor where he then joined the Merdeka Film Productions in the wind-swept lush green Ulu Klang.

Within the eight years at Merdeka Film Productions, he produced 18 movies the last of which was *Laxamana Do Re Mi*, a year before his death. It was ironical that four years later, the studio closed down after the release of the movie *Locheng Maut* (Death Bell).

Back in Kuala Lumpur, as Mohsin Abdullah revealed in his article *Magical Moments Which Were Lost*, P. Ramlee's creativity in churning out better quality movies were hampered by a lack of funds and facing the problems of getting theatres to screen his movies. Suddenly he found that his track records of '*Filem Terbaik* (Best Film)' are no longer relevant because he could not secure bank loans to pursue his passion at the pace he wanted.

Was he a victim of changing times? Would he have taken to a much higher level had he obtained bank loans and established his own movie studio? Would he, as with the Shaw studios, have ceased producing movies with the advent of stiff competition and video technology that saw the closure of many theatres? These questions would be immaterial because he did not live to see the heart-wrenching changes. Shaw Brothers ceased movie production in 1985.

Despite his fame and contribution to the movie and music industry in Malaysia and Asia, Caunter Hall in Pulau Pinang and Jalan Parry were renamed Jalan P. Ramlee about 10 years after his death. He would have been overjoyed to be conferred the title 'Tan Sri' but again it came too late, the title was given posthumously in 1990. He received his Ahli Mangku Negara (AMN) title in 1962.

Saloma was not there to learn about herself getting a 'Puan Sri' title either for she received it 10 years too late. Her only consolation was being conferred a Ahli Mangku Negara (AMN) title in 1975 and Biduanita Negara (National Celebrity Award) in 1979.

British metaphysical poet John Donne (1572-1632) once said, "When one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language." Indeed, eventually the trials and triumphs that the couple underwent did not go unnoticed although they died without really enjoying the fruits of their labour. Memorials dedicated to P. Ramlee have been set up in Kuala Lumpur (1986) and in Pulau Pinang (2000). Until today P. Ramlee movies still capture a sizable television audience as they did more than 35 years ago in the theatres.

Photographs courtesy of Ibrahim Zain



Yong Check Yoon is currently an Editor in the Alumni Liaison Office, USM. He can be reached at [cyong@notes.usm.my](mailto:cyong@notes.usm.my)

# Sumptuous Mutiara

Zulkifli Osman    Yong Cheek Yoon  
Photographs by David Chew

Pen Mutiara at Batu Maung on the southeastern part of Pulau Pinang is one of the many landmarks for food lovers because of its four-star air-conditioned environment and above average food and service. In fact it speaks volumes when you come to realise that it was originally a humble canteen built from timber.

“Batu Maung has grown from a small fishing village to include a deep sea fishing port and this is where the restaurant ‘grew up’ with the Penang Fishermen's Association (PFA) operating it,” said Pen Mutiara general manager Mr Aziz Sabdin. PFA currently has about 6,000 members in the state.



*Kari Kepala Ikan*



Restaurant Pen Mutiara in Batu Maung, Pulau Pinang  
(Photograph courtesy of FPS Interactive)

*Sumptuous Mutiara*

*The restaurant has a cosy ambience by the sea*

*Mr Aziz Sabdin, the general manager*

The restaurant which was established to help improve the livelihood of PFA members, receives its regular supply of seafood from some of its members within the area. Also for the first time, a branch is expected to be opened at Taman Selat in Butterworth soon.

Among its signature dishes, the restaurant is better known for its curry fish head which is served piping hot in a clay pot. The curry paste has been specially prepared by the same lady chef since the restaurant started its operation. The head of an *ikan merah* (red snapper) is often used to cook the curry and the recipe comes complete when it is garnished with ladies' fingers, tomatoes and curry leaves.

The other better known items are the squid fritters eaten dipped in a chilli sauce to bring out its intended spicy flavour which makes it all the more unique. The menu also displays non-seafood dishes such as *kerabu mangga* (mango salad), *telur bungkus* (salad wrapped in scrambled egg) and *kai lan* (chinese kale) with oyster sauce.

These dishes are ordered together with a large jug of iced lime sour-plum juice to tantalise the taste buds.

Pen Mutiara commenced operations in March 2008 but seems to have built up a regular clientele in quick time among locals and outstation seafood lovers thus helping to popularise Pulau Pinang as a gourmet's paradise.



*Tanjung Tuck*

*Telur Bungkus*



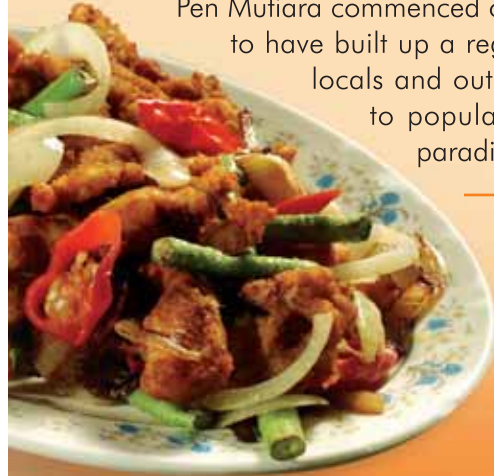
*Squid fritters*



*Kai lan in oyster sauce*



*Iced lime sour-plum juice*



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### VC Bestowed Tan Sri

Vice Chancellor Professor Tan Sri Dato' Dzulkilfi Abdul Razak was bestowed the Panglima Setia Mahkota (PSM) which carries the title Tan Sri in conjunction with Seri Paduka Baginda Yang diPertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin's birthday on 7 June.

Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus



Photograph by Yong Check Yoon

### KL Alumni AGM

About 300 alumni congregated at the Kuala Lumpur Golf Club on the afternoon of 24 May for their Annual General Meeting (AGM). President and committee members were elected in the three-hour high tea-cum-AGM which started at 2pm.

To join the USM KL Alumni chapter, please contact the Secretary, Haji Hasan Addly Mohd Isa at [hasan@geliga.com.my](mailto:hasan@geliga.com.my) or 012-2010522.

### sains@usm

USM launched its Science and Arts Innovation Space on 22 June at Dewan Budaya. The techno-park consisting of an integrated research community for incubation, nurturing and business development is located at Bukit Jambul about 10 minutes drive from the main campus.

Photograph by Yong Check Yoon



Photograph by Yong Check Yoon

### New Deputy Vice-Chancellor

Professor Asma Ismail made history as USM's first woman Deputy Vice-Chancellor on 26 May, being appointed to the Research and Innovation portfolio. She brings along with her a wealth of experience and leadership in Research and Development work and administration having served previously as Director of the Institute of Research in Molecular Medicine (INFORMM) since June 2003.

### Turning Around MAS

Dato' Seri Idris Jala, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Malaysia Airlines (MAS), was invited by his alma mater to conduct a two-session public talk *Turning Around MAS - The Success Story* at Dewan Budaya on 14 July. The talks were organised by USM Alumni Liaison Office and held from 10am to noon and 2.30pm to 4.30pm respectively.



Photograph by Yong Check Yoon



Photograph by Yong Check Yoon

### Super Qigong

Qigong Master Dr Amir Farid Isahak conducted a Super Qigong Workshop on 18 July at Dewan Indah Kembara 2 which was attended by 30 participants. The workshop was divided into two sessions: Super Qigong Practical and a talk on 'How to Stay Young, Healthy and Cancer-Free'. This workshop was organised by USM Alumni Liaison Office.

Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus



### Juhana Visits Old Friends

Juhana Anuar (B. Soc. Sc. '74), left in photo, visited USM recently after being 34 years abroad. She was accompanied by her husband, Mario. Vice Chancellor, Professor Tan Sri Dato' Dzulkipli Abdul Razak and Puan Sri Masrah Abidin, right in photo, spent some time with her updating the development of USM. Juhana is now residing in Switzerland running a bookshop in Crans-Montana.

### Seminar On Cikgu Baha

A one-day seminar on 26 July was dedicated to Mr Mohd Bahroodin Ahmad aka Cikgu Baha in conjunction with Seminar Kefahaman Warisan Yang ke-13 at Lecture Theatre A. Cikgu Baha was conferred the title Tokoh Budayawan Pulau Pinang posthumously during the event in recognition of his contribution as a caring teacher and talented arts practitioner.



Photograph courtesy of USM Public Relations Office



### Special Convocation

A special convocation was held on 30 August for the conferment of the Honorary Doctor of Science on Dr A.P.J Abdul Kalam, former President of India and a renowned aeronautical engineer. The honorary doctorate is in recognition of Dr Abdul Kalam's contributions towards science and technology as instruments of peace and global development.

Photograph from [www.abdulkalam.com](http://www.abdulkalam.com)

### 38<sup>th</sup> Convocation

A total of 775 students were conferred their doctoral and master's degrees while another 5,914 received their undergraduate degrees on 14-17 August. V. Navaratnam and Mohamed Sulaiman were honoured as Professors Emeritus. The four-day event was held at Dewan Tuanku Syed Putra.



Photograph by Yong Check Yoon



Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus

### Kuala Lumpur Chapter's Hi-Tea

The Kuala Lumpur chapter organized a casual get-together in The Legend Hotel on 10 August. About 100 senior and fresh alumni gathered to meet old friends and make new ones while enjoying generous helpings of food and drinks. Dato' Mustaffa, the chapter's President introduced the committee members and made a brief speech. Encouraged by the positive response to the gathering it was decided that similar events will be held every three months.



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*Wishing you  
a blessed  
Ramadhan*

*🕌*

*a joyous  
Eid-ul Fitri*

Picture taken from inside **Rumah Melayu** (the Malay House), now used as a **surau**, located across the School of Housing, Building and Planning