

# onstage **GROOVE**

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takes a leave of absence to test the ability of his son Zahiruddin Syah to run the kingdom as a prelude to assuming the throne. During his absence, the prince squanders the kingdom's wealth to beautify his palace and the royal gardens, making it the most luxurious in the region. This is done at the expense of his subjects' welfare.

Learning of newfound gold in the neighbouring kingdom of Langkapura, Zahiruddin schemes to get the gold by proposing to marry Princess Putri Kamaliah. Since Queen Ratu Salbiah's husband died fighting pirates, Zahiruddin would inherit the kingdom and the gold.

In the event that his marriage proposal was rejected, Ratu Salbiah must present a solution to Sirih Bertepuk Pinang Menari within a month. Failing this, she must compensate Zahiruddin with 100 vessels containing gold or he would attack Langkapura. Either way, Zahiruddin will gain the wealth of the kingdom of Langkapura as the riddle of Sirih Bertepuk Pinang Menari is ambiguous and cannot be resolved.

Meanwhile, Sultan Idris Bistari, disguised as a religious man, journeys to Langkapura and is accepted as Ratu Salbiah's confidant. At the same time, Puteri Kamaliah forms a relationship with Ihsan, a fisherman's son who is unaware of her identity. When he finds out later, he withdraws, knowing his standing as a commoner and that such a union will not be allowed to happen.

Puteri Kamaliah knows her personal affairs must not interfere with her royal responsibility. She has no choice but to accept Zahiruddin's marriage proposal to safeguard her kingdom.

When Ratu Salbiah presents her solution to the riddle of Sirih Bertepuk Pinang Menari, Zahiruddin rejects it and mocks her.

At this juncture, Sultan Idris Bestari makes his appearance and silences

Zahiruddin. The sultan banishes his son to live and learn among the peasants and to not return until he emulates the character traits of hard work and humility as portrayed by Ihsan.

Sultan Idris Bistari announces that both Indra Mahkota and Langkapura will be united through his marriage to Ratu Salbiah.

## DEVICE OF ALIENATION

At this juncture, Pak Yatim, who played the clown adviser, announced a short break to discuss certain salient points of the play and the resolution to the conflicts. It became clear that the performance was just a "rehearsal".

The playwright employed this dramatic device of alienation to prevent the audience from empathising with the emotions of the play so as not to blunt their thinking process with regard to the dramatic materials thus far presented.

The play ended with the resumption of the "rehearsal" with Puteri Kamaliah

announcing her intention to work among the people, accompanied by Mak Inang, Pak Yatim and the Sarbat Seller.

As in a bangsawan play, songs and dances accompanied the dramatic actions and two extra turns of songs and dances were inserted in the early and later part of the play.

All in all it was quite a feat for Universiti Malaysia Terengganu to mount a musical of semi-professional quality, which served as a benchmark for other universities.

Hopefully, the vice-chancellors of the other public universities will give similar considerations to theatrical productions as Nor Aeni and recognise its role within the gamut of university disciplines towards the development of students' creativity and character.

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Universiti Malaysia Terengganu students and staff also took part in the play.

