



*presented by Fourcolours Films & Go-Studio*

# MEMORIES OF MY BODY

*Original Title:* Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku



## A FILM BY GARIN NUGROHO

Indonesia / 105 min / Color / Biopic – LGBT – Music & Dance

DCP | Indonesian - Javanese | 24 fps | 16:9 | Dolby 5.1

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## SYNOPSIS

Juno is just a child when his father abandons him in their village of Center Java. Alone now, he joins a Lengger dance center where men shape their feminine appearance and movement. But the sensuality and sexuality that come from dance and bodies, mixed with the violent social and political Indonesian environment, force Juno to move from village to village. Even if on this journey Juno receives attention and love from his dance teachers, his weird aunty, his old uncle, a handsome boxer and a Warok, he still has to face by himself the battlefield that his body is becoming.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

A film is a personal statement or expression of anxiety about the surrounding personal and socio-political issues. The joy of making a movie comes when it succeeds to deliver such messages. I have made 18 films containing various themes; from early 19th century as a backdrop to the present Indonesia; from Islamic radicalism, economic liberalism, to the country's communist pogrom; all condensed in little stories from various islands in Indonesia.

This time, I am very interested in the issue of masculinity and femininity merged in a person's body. Having a body that is both masculine and feminine has been a very sensitive issue in Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world.



# INTERVIEW WITH GARIN NUGROHO

## **How did you come up with the idea for MEMORIES OF MY BODY?**

In the past few years, I've worked with Rianto (choreographer and dancer of Lengger Lanang, in which male dancers assume female roles) as a dramaturg. This led to my interest in the blend of masculinity and femininity that Rianto had featured in his works. Then it also took me back to the traditional art I knew from my childhood, a time when the unity of masculinity and femininity was seen as something natural. Yet nowadays, there is a positive and negative side to it, marked by violence and censorship. That's where the film came about.

## **Could you tell us more about the history and philosophy of the Lengger dance? How do the locals view the dance in the present day?**

In this film, there are two dances dealing with the interplay of masculinity and femininity: Lengger Lanang and Reog. Lengger Lanang originated from Banyumas [Central Java] and is a popular social dance amongst the locals. A mystical ceremony needs to take place in order to summon the ancestors that will eventually choose who will become the dancers. In Reog, there's the belief that to become a powerful dancer, the leader (male Warok), must find a male partner. Both dances are part of the natural way of uniting masculinity and femininity.



Lengger dance in its place of origin, which is Banyumas and its surrounding areas, has seen tremendous growth. But in other areas, it is marginalized and often banned. It is often perceived as haram [forbidden by Islamic law] and the sharia-based regulations—which at first revolved around the obligation for Muslim women to wear the hijab—have made the dance marginalized, prohibited, and so on.

## **How did you select the cast and what was it like working with them?**

Regarding the cast, I chose mostly the performing arts maestros in Java as well as those whose professions suited the roles. They mostly grew up in the village and are well-versed in Javanese culture as their acting must look natural. For example, the Lengger teacher in real life is a dalang (puppeteer) of wayang kulit (shadow puppetry) as well as a popular Javanese song singer. Endah Laras, who plays the aunt, is a



keroncong singer and also sings at wayang performances. Whani and Harsono, who play Warok and the uncle, are Yogyakarta-based stage actors. The boxer is a television star and was a free fighting champion. Juno has a background in theater.

**How did you meet Rianto and could you talk about your previous collaborations with him?**

After “Opera Jawa” (2006), I made real Javanese stage operas and some dance performances, such as “Pagar Bumi.” Then in the past two years, I’ve been working as a dramaturg with Rianto (choreographer). Our latest work was “Medium” and “Hijra”. Medium will be performed at Esplanade and Sydney after touring some European countries. Hijra is a work in progress. As a dancer Rianto is currently touring with Akram Khan Company, performing “Until the Lions.”



**How did you intend to portray the political and social backdrop of Indonesia within MEMORIES OF MY BODY?**

MEMORIES OF MY BODY is both a statement and a critique. It states that the blend of masculinity and femininity have always been a normal part of nature and tradition. It also criticizes violence towards the body in both social and political contexts.

**What message do you hope to get across through the film?**

The film is a poetic presentation inviting us to love every detail of our body. The body contains thoughts and emotions. The body has its own role which can be personal, social, political, economic, artistic, and religious. The film shows violence towards the body—attacking the personal, social, and political contexts of the body.

**You’ve done a number of music-related films previously. How was it like for you to come back to narrative films?**

My storytelling styles vary, depending on the ideas and themes. Similar to plants, each seed has its own form and path of growth. Some films need a narrative and some don’t. The film I made when I just graduated film school, “Love in a Slice of Bread,” was developed out of my fascination with the French New Wave cinema. As for “Opera Jawa,” I was interested in the storytelling style of *wayang orang* called “*langendriyan*.”



**The music within the film seems to correspond to the time of when the story took place. How did you select the pieces? What did they represent during those specific periods of time?**

The film's music correlates to the period in which the father-son story takes place. The story is set against 1965, 1970, and post-1990s. In 1965, over 500,000 people labeled as communists were massacred by Suharto's regime. Many of those were *dalangs* and other types of artists. After the late 1990s, or as the Reform-era began, there has been more freedom of speech and freedom to be involved in politics on the one hand, and on the other hand, radicalism has also been on the rise, causing censorship and violence to fall upon artists.



**There are several scenes of discussions and dances by the real main protagonist. How did you do those scenes? Were they rehearsed and written ahead, or improvised?**

I always leave room to the script for improvisation, depending on the circumstances. Indonesians are used to the oral tradition, so improvisation and discussions are important. The majority of the cast members are dance maestros and teachers. They're a walking library of culture, so they can excel in what they do even without rehearsals. Only the younger cast and the adult Juno were trained by Rianto.

**You've attended Venice before, what does it mean for you to be there again with MEMORIES OF MY BODY?**

I've participated in the Venice Film Festival before with my film "Opera Jawa" and as a judge for Orizzonti. To me, it's always interesting to present a new theme at a festival that is the oldest in the world and with so much prestige.

**You were somehow linked to two of the most important Indonesian films of 2017, MARLINA THE MURDERER IN FOUR ACTS and THE SEE AND THE UNSEEN. Are you currently collaborating with other Indonesian talents on any projects?**

Working with young people is a way for me to read a new map that I didn't know I could. In MEMORIES OF MY BODY, 95 percent are new-kids-on-the-block of



Yogyakarta that I didn't know of. During my first years of filmmaking (1990-1995), I also asked my students, who were in their 20's, such as Riri Riza, Hanung [Bramantyo], and others to take on important roles within the production.

**Can you share a bit about your current or upcoming projects?**

I just wrapped up the International Gamelan Festival [in Indonesia], in which I was a co-director. I also did some research projects on a 1930s musical film, a film about an 80-year-old female trickster, and a play called "A Planet," made with Asia Topa - Melbourne Art Centre. Now my ongoing research is on the choir and dance for a stage play set in Flores, Eastern Indonesia.

With the recent growth of Indonesia cinema and you being a key figure, how do you see your role as being part of it? Any outlooks for the future of cinema in Indonesia?

In the millennial era, to me, cinema's growth can be seen in two ways. On the one hand, films can be produced more efficiently and effectively using advanced technology, combined with other forms of art such as dance, visual art, fashion, theater, installation, etc. On the other hand, in Asia and especially Indonesia, the digital era means that youths now have a "weapon" to explore, create, and collaborate. Filmmaking becomes subversive. There's a camera in every youngster's pocket. At any time, it can be concealed or pointed at something at no cost. Anyone, not necessarily with the sufficient level of literacy, can own it. The usage of smartphones and smartphone cameras has brought about a new oral tradition. Anything can be made anywhere, anytime, and by anyone. Now I've been doing more cross-disciplinary festivals and teaching in many parts of Indonesia, as well as collaborating, looking for new talents and new, brave voice.



## DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY



Garin Nugroho was born in Jogjakarta, Indonesia in 1961 and completed his studies in 1985 at the film academy in Jakarta. His debut film LOVE IS A SLICE OF BREAD (1991) was selected as the Best Young Director at the Asia Pacific International Film Festival. His second feature LETTER FOR AN ANGEL (1994) won Best Film at Taormina and Tokyo. His following LEAF ON A PILLOW (1998) opened in Un Certain regard, Cannes and won the Special Jury Prize in Tokyo. Followed BIRD MAN TALE that won the NETPAC award at the Belinale in 2002. His OPERA JAVA, produced as part of the celebration of the 250th birthday of Mozart, premiered in Venice in 2006 and won awards in Tokyo, Cinemanila and Singapore. MEMORIES OF MY BODY is his 19th feature film.



# DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

**MEMORIES OF MY BODY (KUCUMBU TUBUH INDAH KU)** 2018, feature

**A WOMAN FROM JAVA (NYAI)** 2016, feature

**CHAOTIC LOVE POEMS (AACH..AKU JATUH CINTA)** 2015, feature

**THE HIJRA (GURU BANGSA TJOKROAMINOTO)** 2015, feature

**SATAN OF JAVA (SETAN JAWA)** 2015, silent film with gamelan orchestra

**SOEGIJA (DIBAWAH POHON)** 2012, feature

**THE BLINDFOLD (MATA TERTUTUP)** 2012, feature

**BLUE GENERATION (GENERASI BIRU)** 2009, feature

**UNDER THE TREE (DIBAWAH POHON)** 2008, feature

**REQUIEM OF JAVA (OPERA JAWA)** 2006, feature

**SERAMBI** 2005, feature, omnibus

**OF LOVE AND EGGS RINDU KAMI PADAMU)** 2004, feature

**BIRD MAN TALE (AKU INGIN MENCIUMMU SEKALI SAJA)** 2002, feature

**THE POET (PUISI TAK TERKUBURKAN)** 2001, feature

**LEAF ON A PILLOW (DAUN DI ATAS BANTAL)** 1998, feature

**AT THE MOON DANCES (BULAN TERTUSUK ILALANG)** 1995, feature

**A LETTER TO ANGEL (SURAT UNTUK BIDADARI)** 1994, feature

**LOVE IN A SLICE OF BREAD (CINTA DALAM SEPOTONG ROTI)** 1990, feature



# CAST & CREW

## Cast

Muhammad Khan	Juno
Raditya Evandra	Little Juno
Rianto	The Dancer
Sujiwo Tejo	Lengger's Teacher
Teuku R fnu Wikana	The Reageant
Randy Pangalila	The Boxer
Whani Dharmawan	Reog Maestro
Queen Dorotea	The Regeant's Wife
Endah Laras	Juno's Aunty
Mbok Tun	Lengger's Manager
Cahwati	The Reageant's Singer
Fajar Suharno	Juno's Uncle
Windarti	Dancer Teacher
Anneke	The Reageant's Wife Assistant

## Director

## Screenwriter

## Producer

## Co-Producer

## Executive Producers

## Associate Producer

## DOP

## Art Director

## Sound Recordist

## Line Producer

## Location Manager

## Casting Director

## Composer

## Wardrobe & Make up

## Editor

## Production

## Co-Production

## International Sales

Garin Nugroho  
Garin Nugroho  
Ifa Isfansyah  
Matthew Jordan  
Christopher Smith  
Michy Gustavia  
Eddie Cahyono  
Panji Prasetyo  
Krishto Damar Alam  
Teoh Gay Hian  
Edy Wibowo  
Dicky Permana  
Yosi Arifianto  
Haryanto  
Hendrei Ari  
Mondo Gascaro  
Retno Ratih Damayanti  
Greg Arya  
Fourcolours Films  
Go-Studio  
Asian Shadows

