

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**WOMEN THEATRE DIRECTORS IN
MALAYSIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
ROHANI MD. YOUSOFF AND
FAUZIAH NAWI**

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Thesis submitted in fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Artistic and Creative Technology


Faculty of Film, Theatre and Animation

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulation of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the result of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as reference work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any degree or qualification.

I, hereby, acknowledge that have been supplied with the Academic Rules and Regulations for Post Graduate, Universiti Teknologi MARA, regulating the conduct of my study and research.

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ABSTRACT

This study is an overview of the two most experienced and established Malay women directors in Malaysia's modern Malay theatre scene. Rohani Md. Yousoff and Fauziah Nawi are two early prolific directors who had successfully staged professional productions during the latter part of the twentieth century. These two women directors undoubtedly are deserving of more attention for the significant impact they had made as directors in the Malay Theatre. Unfortunately, their contributions had not received as much acknowledgement or recognition as they truly deserve. To address this shortcoming, biographical details including information on their training and career paths, productions, awards, bibliographic materials, critical receptions covering their directing styles have been collected as an endeavor to fill in that artistic gap to address the missing information on women's involvement as directors in the Malay theatre world. Applying Aristotle's dramatic theatre and Brecht's epic theatre theories on the six theatre performances being focused on in this study; both directors with three theatre performances each managed to align these theoretical approaches towards directing their stage plays. The research findings will also help to recognize the many overlooked contributions of these women directors and henceforth empower other women directors interested in delving into the Malay theatre arena.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Stage directing in the Malay theatre scene has traditionally been a male-dominated profession led by dramatists, playwrights, directors, actors and critics associated with such well-known names as the late Syed Alwi, Noordin Hassan, Johan Jaaffar, Rahim Razali, Hatta Azad Khan, Ahmad Yatim, Bidin Subari, Zakaria Ariffin, Dinsman, Mana Sikana, the late Kishen Jit, Mustapa Noor and many more. (Mohamed Ghouse Nasuruddin, 2005).

Only by the 1980's did Malay women begin to step into the field of stage directing in Malay theatre in Malaysia. Amongst these women director pioneers in the modern Malay drama industry are Rohani Md. Yousoff and Faridah Merican. Faridah Merican, however, was clearly advocating English theatre while Rohani Md. Yousoff concentrated on Malay theatre. The number of modern Malay theatre women directors have slightly increased throughout the 1990's with names such as Fauziah Naw, Rosminah Mohd. Tahir, Siti Rohayah Attan and Erma Fatima. (Mohamed Ghouse Nasuruddin, 2005).

Johan Jaaffar's article in the *New Straits Times* dated on the 8th of January 2011 mentioned three active women activists in the 80's and 90's. They are Rohani Md. Yousoff, Faridah Merican and Fauziah Naw. If Faridah Merican practices theatre and stage directing with contemporary local and foreign content in the English language, Rohani Md. Yousoff on the other hand, despite her English and western theatre education background chooses to direct in the Malay language. She is also actively translating and adapting foreign scripts to suit Malaysian audiences. Alongside Rohani, Fauziah Naw is another female playwright and a stage director who only works in the Malay language.

Looking at the list of Malay women directors and their backgrounds in the Malay modern theatre, this study focuses on two Malay women theatre activists, namely, Rohani Md. Yousoff and Fauziah Naw. These two women directors are chosen because they are Malaysians and have directed numerous plays for the Malay