

Lucy Guerin Inc

Dance Dialogues: Melanie Lane and Eko Supriyanto

5 October 2021

Estelle Conley: Alright, let's get started. Good evening, and welcome to this Dance Dialogue conversation with Melanie Lane and Eko Supriyanto. My name is Estelle Conley, and I am the producer at Lucy Guerin Inc. I'd like to begin by acknowledging that I am joining today's talk from the land of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation, and pay my respects to elders past and present. I'd also like to extend this to any First Nations people joining us here tonight.

I am a woman with green eyes, and shoulder-length brown hair, with a side part. I am wearing a leopard-print collared shirt, and the background behind me is blurred. My pronouns are she/her.

Before introducing our artists, I'd love to run through just a few bits of housekeeping. At the bottom of your screen, you'll notice a chat button. In the chat, we encourage you to let us know where you're zooming in from tonight. To do this, be sure to select "All panellists and attendees" in the little blue drop-down menu first. This talk is being Auslan interpreted, and I'd like to welcome our interpreters Dave and Nick, it's great to have us with you tonight. The talk is also being live-transcribed, so if you would like to view the transcription during the talk, you can click on the link that we've just posted in the chat, and this will appear in a separate browser window for you.

We are recording tonight's session, so that the audio can be published on our website down the track.

So, onto tonight's talk. We are delighted to welcome Melanie Lane and Eko Supriyanto for a deeply insightful conversation about creating work, and their history working together. Before I hand over to them, some brief introductions.

Melanie Lane is an Australian-Javanese choreographer and performer. She has collaborated with artists from film, visual art, theatre and music, creating works that tread between performative forms and contexts. Her independent work has been presented at international festivals and theatres across the globe. Alongside her independent work, she has been commissioned to create new works for numerous companies; including Chunky Move, Sydney Dance Company, Dance North, Schauspiel Leipzig, HAU Berlin, and the West Australian Ballet. Melanie is currently a resident artist at The Substation in Melbourne, and associate artist at QL2 in Canberra. Welcome, Melanie.

Founder and artistic director for EkosDance Company, and solo dance studio in Indonesia, Eko Supriyanto is the leading Indonesian dancer and choreographer of his generation. Trained in Javanese court dances and the Indonesian martial art of pencak silat since the age of 7, Eko's performance career spans major works, and

tours throughout Indonesia, Europe, America and the Asia-Pacific. Eko holds a PhD in Performance Studies from Gadjah Mada University, and a Master of Fine Arts in Dance and Choreography from the UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures. Eko's performance career stretches from major commercial productions through to dance research projects. Welcome to Eko.

And without further ado, I'll hand over to you both.

Melanie Lane: Thanks, Estelle. Hi, I'm Melanie Lane. And I'm zooming in from Boon Wurrung country, and pay my respect to elders past, present and emerging. I'm a woman in my early 40's, I have long brown hair. I'm of European-Australian and Javanese cultural heritage, and I'm wearing a black hoodie, and my living room is behind me. I'll pass it over to you, Eko.

Eko Supriyanto: Hi, I'm Eko Supriyanto. I give respect to my elders, my ancestors, especially my mother and my father that's already passed away in Heaven. I also pay respect to all of you who's attending for this meeting. I am a man who is 51 years old, do we need to speak about the year? I am wearing a black shirt and I am considering myself as sharp, that is very small, but watch out. I'm zooming in from Solo, Central Java, Indonesia.

Melanie Lane: Thanks, Eko. I thought it would be really great to start off with when we first met, which was around a decade ago – so 2011– for a project that brought us together as performers and collaborators, through a work called *solid.states*, which was created and directed by Arko Renz together with ourselves. It's really fun be able to sit and talk with you about this, because I don't think we've ever actually talked about it in retrospect. So, I'm so curious to remember that experience, and maybe how that was for you as a first encounter.

Eko Supriyanto: Actually, we met in 2010, the project we started in 2011, no?

Melanie Lane: That's true, yes.

Eko Supriyanto: So, I think I was introduced to you by name by Arko Renz, where I met previously almost two years before I met you. So, Arko Renz was always talking about you, and how great you are as a dancer and as a choreographer. "And she's Javanese," he told me, "she's half Javanese and half Australian. So, I think you would be matching, and would like to work together." So I said to him: "Why don't you match me up to her, so we can work together?" And then from there, it was suddenly a year after, I think 2009, I believe, that when he came to Indonesia, he immediately saying, "Eko, the project with you and Melanie will be happening!" So I was excited. I was very happy. And I did actually quite searching about you, Mel. I call, Melanie is always been mbak because as a man in Solo for Javanese culture, we always respect the woman, and we always call Mbak, which is a m-b-a-k, which is 'sister'.

Melanie Lane: I love that, and I call Eko 'Mas', which is brother.

Eko Supriyanto: Like brother, yeah. So, I searched about you Mel, in Google and also Arko was showing me the video of the previous work that you did with Arko. It was quite exciting. And, finally, 2010, almost the end of 2010, we met in Solo, in Wisma Seni, which is the place where we start the project of the *solid.states*. I think when I met you first time, I would say it just really, incredible seeing, we call it 'Indo' in Indonesia, we call it Indo, no? So Indo is just half-Indonesian and half-Western, or white kind of person. Or 'bule', we call it bule in Indonesia. So, that was really impressive... watching you dancing and then start learning Javanese dance with Maspa and Bayun, almarhum. It was quite... very, very interesting – not interesting – exciting, for me, to see it. Then actually we developed a piece, directed by Arko, but actually created together as well. So I think that was very amazing to see that process, looking back at that memories it's just really, the idea of stability and instability. I was Javanese, I am Javanese, but not really Javanese; I was born in Borneo, my father was Dayak, and my mother Chinese-Javanese. But Melanie is Javanese and Australian. So, how the kind of – I'm living a lot in America, in U.S, but Melanie never been to Java; so it's kind of interesting to see that kind of connecting. And to see that as the start of the process that we have.

Melanie Lane: Yeah, and I also think, this project in particular, I feel like for both of us, was sort of a pivotal moment. For us not only as performers, but as makers, because I feel like we're both quite influenced by that experience, and that work with Arko. But, my memory of that time... So, *solid.states* is a work, for Eko and myself, which ended up to be basically two solos that are bridged together, and was really drawing upon our experience of navigating how we search for our connections to heritage, or to physical history and experience. And it was really quite confronting for me, actually, coming to Indonesia for this project, because it was the first time I had come to Indonesia since I was a child. So, I had had this really long period of having no connection really, apart from through my mother, of course, and my family. I hadn't had a 'real' connection with Indonesia until this project, where I was sort of thrown in the deep end almost, you know; it was like three months in Solo, which is in central Java. And I found it actually quite confronting, because I realised in that moment, I'd had, I'd spent so much time being busy surviving as an independent artist, and not really considering this ancestry that I hold in my body, in my history. And being there really shook that – I was like wow, I have this huge part of me that, of my ancestry that I haven't invested in. And it was really funny because like so many encounters that really triggered that. Like even watching you, Eko, performing your traditional dances and song, I was actually really jealous of you, you know? I was like: Wow, this man, he has so much knowledge that has been transferred from ancestor to ancestor to ancestor, and it's so deep and it's so embedded. So there was this real longing from my side to know what that feels like, or how can I even get a taste of it, or how can I somehow touch it, in a way? So that time was really, really meaningful. So I had, like you said, I had the private dance classes, Javanese dance classes, with Bayun and Maspa.

Eko Supriyanto: Maspa and Bayun, yeah.

Melanie Lane: And, I was, it was really hard. It was such an interesting experience, because in learning those dances, I realised actually how far away they were from me, and how I had to really dig and excavate my body to even attempt, or to try to feel it. And I think that was sort of the essence of the work, in a way, was this searching, or this attempting to try to feel these parts of you that are embedded in your body in some way or another. And I think for me, that experience has really informed a lot of the ways that I work now, in and around this space of being in between. Which, in that time, felt very confusing and discombobulating; and I think the work was about that instability, and about how you sort of navigate, or hold on to, those experiences. So, yeah, I think for me that experience was really strong, and continues to inform how I think about, how I position myself between knowledge and ancestral knowledge as well.

Eko Supriyanto: Well, I think it's also happened with me. I think it's kind of in reverse, where I have to return back to Javanese court dance, to Javanese dance that is really, actually we choose to use lots of Alus style, and the Cakil style. Alus style is the fine movement style of the Javanese, and then the Cakil style, the giant style, of the strong male character. And it was just the beginning of it, when Arko was asking me to do this, I was like: Again? Do I have to do it again? Do I have to return back to Java? Do I have to return back to study Javanese, I mean to presenting Javanese dance? Which, you know... in Indonesia sometimes, when you become the contemporary dance, it's sort of like a bit of boundaries between the 'real' dancer that still dancing Javanese dance continuously, with a person like me, who actually being away from it. Yeah, at first I was dancing with my grandfather, with my teachers, since I was a child. But then being... travelling, and being in America, travelling all over the world, I feel like, or a lot of friend of mine think I am not good at Javanese dancing anymore. It's really like, it's sort of like shaming myself to be dancing a Javanese dance, court dance... a refined style. So it's really tough at the time, for me, as a Javanese dancer, practicing a Javanese dance, in front of my Javanese friends, working with a European choreographers or director, plus with you. So it's sort of like... pushing those boundaries that I already have around a stereotype of a contemporary dancer, he will not be good at the Javanese dance anymore. So it's really challenging. But yet, at the same times, when then Arko actually giving me the task. You know, dancing the (speaks Indonesian) [18:22], which is one of the dance solo characters that is dancing by 1 metre square, while I also have to smoking very slow. I remember that moment, and it was just really challenging. And by then, the more tasks that he pursued to me, it was very interesting, and it was really making me think: Oh, that's what instability means, that's what we're looking for. Especially after we used the setting, the earthquake scene. So it's really physically that we've been challenged by not only the task, but also the physical tools that we explore on that.

So I think that was the other layers of the experience that I have, of course, and then watching you dancing Cakil, or Javanese dance. Which is, you know, at the time I feel like: Ah, it's just, it's not about a good Javanese dancer doing Javanese dance, or not good Western dancer doing a Javanese dance. So, it was... it made me put on another layer of understanding that the body itself, it's just really not about the technique, about the criteria of the 'good' Javanese dance, or 'good' any

kind of dance, but about the body; how they representing the movement, or the ancestor, layer of the ancestor iteration. Which is, and has become very important for us. I feel like, it's just, it's not really about Javanese or about Western, again, but about the body elaborating the idea and pursuing the non-comfort zone of the body, of our dance, I think.

Melanie Lane: Yeah, it feels very much like, you know, even when I'm in... since 2011, I visited Indonesia a lot after that, because I was really just so keen to learn more, and to understand actually how I position myself there. Because every time I go there, and still, even though I've been back so many times now and spend so much time there, I still feel like a tourist. I still feel like a bule and people still call me a bule, because that's what I look like, visually, and that's what I am, that's what I am.

And it has taken me a long time to feel confident that I, that that space is actually interesting to occupy. To actually, instead of trying to be something that I'm not; I'm not a full Javanese person, I can never understand what that lived experience is completely, but I can understand my transcultural, weird positioning in that space. And I think that space is actually really interesting, but it takes, has taken, and still takes me a lot of time to understand how to navigate it.

Yeah, so I think that that work that we did back in the day was really the beginning of that trajectory of searching, and I've come to learn that that trajectory of searching is the work that I'm interested in. Just the searching in itself. And I'm interested in what that searching looks like, in the body; as a language, or as a choreography. And what kinds of mythologies can be created from that space.

Eko Supriyanto: I think for me, also, directly working with Arko and you, Mel, in that piece, one it's just really made me realise that the returning of being the Javanese dancer, doing a Javanese dance, with a lot of tasks, with a lot of challenging moments, or tools that we can use. And understanding how the area of deconstructing the movement, by the physical tool, the earthquake machine, by understanding from the outside perspective of Arko, who's not also Indonesian, who's not also Javanese. And, you know, face to face, and dealing with these two solos that we have, and watching you dancing, interpreting the Javanese movement with your own body, with your own interpretation of the energy. It just makes me realise that this is what I, this is what actually I wanted to do more. Understanding, and how this tool, and how this strategy of making from something that is very solid but is not, from anywhere else, but it just really return back to a Javanese dancer. A person that live and study Javanese dance. But then travelling abroad for quite some time. Which then, I also remember when I was in America, being a Javanese dancer is being exoticised all the time with American. How I'm not capable to pursue some kind of modern dance or modern technique. Where I am still, you know, a Javanese, exotic man dancing a modern, weird dance. So, yeah, that happened, I think that's also happening.

And with this work, it just made me realise that from the tool, the thing that we simply have, I think that we can elaborate it into something bigger, and something

that is global; of course it is not only physical movement. For me, understanding of stability and instability, that's sort of the trajectory of the understanding, of *my* understanding, that we need to work on that path. And then, as you know, since then, coming to Jailolo and working with these Jailolo dancers with their traditional dance, that I am becoming a foreigner from that kind of perspective. So, it's just really helpful, and it just really shows me to think more on that direction.

Melanie Lane: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. So because I think we both work in that way, that we often are drawn to bodies that are outside of our own remit of dance knowledge... like I'm often, not always, but often drawn to bodies that have a really specific history; like whether they're body builders or ballet dancers or exotic dancers or people with a disability. I'm interested in learning, working with bodies that I can achieve, or somehow shift the lens in which my knowledge can be... that I can accumulate... well, that's not the right word, but I can see through the lens of another body. But you do that through, what I've seen, through the different works you're creating across the islands of Indonesia. And that always really fascinates me about how you, as a Javanese-Borneo man, how you approach that in working with these different communities, in often quite isolated parts of Indonesia with very specific traditional dances and cultures. So, yeah, how do you approach that when you arrive somewhere with a new community of people?

Eko Supriyanto: Yeah... I think it was a moment that I was really exhausting. I was really tired. And at the same time I was really worried, because all my dancers in Solo studio at the time, and all my dancers in my community, they can do anything I want; they are creating more work that's even more beautiful and strong than anything I am. I was just like: Oops, what should I do? So when I come and got the invitation to Jailolo, it was really open my eyes that it is not only Java that we can explore, that it is not only Ramayana and Mahabharata that we can pursue as an idea of the work. But also this community, this surrounding island, that is very... I would say is very limited in many different access. But yet at the same time they have so much material; they have the richness of tradition that is so different than Java. And I was very fascinated on that moment when I came there, and when I saw these dancers.

But for me, I'm looking back and thinking back on the process of me and Arko and you, Mel, thinking of like: What if I'm working here... which I can think over that Arko is me right now, here in Jailolo. So, it just really made me realise that I am working in a different culture, I am working in a different attitude. And that sort of is giving me a space to do research on, not only just looking on the dance technique or the material, the repertoire or the dance, but even the people, that I have to meet, that I have to talk, and I have to eat together, and that I have to swim together on the ocean. And that's what I apply myself, diving into that culture, from the beginning. Otherwise, you know, it's always like... when I was in America I was a Javanese, exotic man, a Javanese, exotic dancer. When I was in Jailolo, I was like this colonial man from Java, who's colonising other parts of Java. So it's really challenging, at the time. But I think when I'm thinking, what my stomach is always saying: returning back, or going back, and being a guest person for another culture, I think just let it go, everything in your accessories, just leave them.

Melanie Lane: That's a really good way of putting it, that you're a guest. And being a guest in another culture requires a very specific duty of care, and way of listening, I think, to people that you work with. And I really learned a lot about that spending time in Indonesia. And it became, I think the last project I did in your studios, in 2019, was really, basically the project was that. Because it was the first work that I initiated in Indonesia, with a full Indonesian team, five dancers, dramaturg and two musicians. Actually, one of the musicians is half-Australian half-Balinese, Pawata. But it was that thing again of me trying to understand: Ok, how do I position myself as someone from the West, coming to Indonesia and working with this group of artists that share a very specific, although very diverse, lived experience there in Indonesia? And yeah, it became more that I was really, and I'm still learning about how to do that in a way. And it was really about listening, actually, that I came there to listen. And yes, in some ways I was facilitating a space where I could do that listening, but also inviting these specific artists – who I'd worked with before, I'd met them all through different ways in Padang Panjang, in Sumatra, and in Bandung, and then in Solo, in Jogja. So, I think from the beginning of that process, I was trying to be as careful as I can about making sure that I knew the people I was working with, and that they wanted to work with me, and that it was a space to really listen, and to manifest a way of working which was about: What is our shared experience? And that shared experience really came from, again, going back to this first work we did together, ten years ago, was really about how do we all share this experience of in-betweenness. Because I learned a lot from these artists, that they also experience that feeling of in-betweenness, between the diversity of culture within Indonesia itself. Because it's so incredibly culturally diverse, and a lot of the artists are travelling around the islands, and experience a similar... way of negotiating those ways to navigate the world.

Eko Supriyanto: I think also even when we work at *solid.states*, and not to mention to compare, but I think when I work in Jailolo, and now in Belu for another project, I feel like there is not only listening, but how that we can negotiate in a way that is really not to be imposing of the power. Sort of like a.... a really grounded, and specific feeling that you need to listening when we are negotiating was really understanding of how we can putting myself, or ourselves, as a person that can empower them. Rather than putting over the power, the layer that can be damage of the relationship, I think. So I think that's really a really big challenge for me. And I think the learning from *solid.states* that we have, it just really makes sense that we have that feeling of the negotiating; the listening of Arko, the listening of you, how you feel learning Javanese dances, and how I feel back to Java and doing these Javanese dances with the shaking movement of the platform. And how that I was dancing very carefully, and tried to be good, but it was distracting all the time; by Arko and by, at some point, having the ego of being a choreographer and a Javanese dancer. And Arko was like attacking my understanding, and my principal knowledge of Javanese dance at the same time. I think that's really powerful. And I found it again when I was in Jailolo and even more in Belu. You know, how people are in the same country, but they still feel like I'm doing this

colonial stuff as a Javanese dancer, as a Javanese person. Which is not true, because I am not really Javanese at the same time.

Melanie Lane: It's all very hybrid. I feel like it's interesting the way you speak about exoticism as well, and how you've been exoticised in the West. You know, sometimes I feel really stuck, because the realm of exoticism is so... it's such a slippery territory. You can easily, things can be read in so many ways, and in very slippery ways. And I've often thought about how do we read exoticism, and how can it be subverted? Or how can we actually work with that idea as a question, or a provocation, in our bodies that experience that push and pull of exoticism? Like I think it's fascinating that you did this whole Madonna tour, with this Javanese solo where you were sort of exoticised as this beautiful bird, and it's just so interesting. But it was also incredible, you know, to see that. Yeah, it's sort of a never-ending...

Eko Supriyanto: Even I actually take advantage of being exotic for this Madonna tour. She never cut my hair, because I told her: When you cut my hair, you'll have to find a wife for me, because I have to get married in my culture. Speaking in a culture of, sort of how...

Melanie Lane: There's an economy in it as well.

Eko Supriyanto: Yeah, yeah.

Melanie Lane: Yeah, that's really interesting. I mean, I struggle with it sometimes in my own work. I haven't created a lot of work where I specifically search for, or speak of, this ancestral connection. I made a couple of works where I have, and yeah, it challenges me because of a couple of things. I mean one is as a diasporic body in Australia, often it feels as though it's been asked of you; to go to that space, because you are... just because you are. And it's hard to be able to balance that with a history that has been influenced by so many other interests.

Eko Supriyanto: I was just wondering, though, when I was performing my trilogy; you know, *Cry Jailolo*, *Balabala* and *Salt*, in Australia, specifically, there's a lot of question that is just really not ordinary question as I received when I was in America, for example. I don't know, do you know why? I think because also at some points I was dealing with the indigenous culture in Jailolo. And also referring to a place in Jailolo that is not really... it's just really known as this great cultural state or region dealing with a lot of history. And when I was performing in Australia, more so it's about, they are more interested on speaking and discussing with the dancers, and how they experienced working with this company, and touring and performing. While, understanding where they're coming from is also a point that is really projecting on a lot of these discussions that we have in Australia. I still remember, you might remember that we performed it for Sydney Festival and in Melbourne; and it's just really something that is quite rewarding for me to see how the response of the audience in Australia. Although in Europe at some point it's also another different perspective, in some ways.

Melanie Lane: In what way is it different in Europe?

Eko Supriyanto: I still kind of like thinking that in Europe, at some point, really is still looking at the piece as kind of a traditional, again exotic, traditional dance. Whereas in Australia, I never get that expression before. I mean, up until the last piece that we did for, even for *Ibu-Ibu Belu*, which was performing in Asia TOPA last year. Never get that kind of response on that.

Melanie Lane: That's really interesting. I'm just keeping an eye on the time, but I'm really curious how actually you formulate – because you work with a lot of dancers, and you work with their traditional dance – but you always find ways in which you can frame it or deliver it through a very contemporary lens. And I think that's... I'm just really fascinated in what does it mean to be contemporary working with traditional bodies?

Eko Supriyanto: And also not to mention they are not professional dancers, all of them. They are really like... how do you call it? An ordinary person from the village, from this island, that really have no experience at all, no whatsoever, to even dancing on stage, one-hour long show. And people from *Ibu-Ibu Belu* for example, they never think this traditional dance of Likurai can be something bigger, not only just about the traditional dance.

But I think what I want to, meant to, say is actually how I was very fascinated and interested on the rawness of them. So it's the rawness, the spirit, the freedom that I'm looking for the dance, for the dancers, and how that we can work together on this way. Thinking about that, the rawness has become something that is very pure, very neutral. And of course, well, choreographically, artistically, again changing it in the process of having Arko as a dramaturg, also having Jan Maertens as a lighting designer. The feedback even more interesting for me; how we can see this process, this work, this comes by three other different personality and different culture. And that's also what I found really interesting after working with you and Arko in *solid.states*. Just to have a lot of discussion, have a lot of perspective, and I think I never received that kind of impulse of this process before. Up until *solid.states*, and then continuing from that.

Melanie Lane: Yeah, I noticed that also when I began working more in Indonesia, and finding that conversation was something that was less familiar. There was more this sort of process of teaching, or transferring, or replicating as a process to create work. And conversation seemed to be something that was like...

Eko Supriyanto: Taboo!

Melanie Lane: Yeah, or like taboo, or there was a fear over it or something. Yeah, I think the project I did in 2019 with those dancers and that team was very much about conversation, and it felt really liberating and beautiful, what came out of it.

Eko Supriyanto: And also more interesting, especially for *Ibu-Ibu Belu* for example, after this conversation with Arko and Jan Maertens for example, and also Renee was there, my dramaturg; an Indonesian colleague that we have in

Indonesia. It's also a team that there has now become another layer of the dancer that join for the discussion. So that's really, really making me exciting at the time, for the process of *Ibu-Ibu Belu*, *Cry Jailolo*, *Balabala* and *Salt* probably more... is more only the direction of the discussion of me and Arko, me and Mas Iskandar, or Mas Wawan or Mbak Ubi for *Balabala*. But for *Ibu-Ibu Belu* it was just really three layers of discussion: me, Mas Arko, Mas Jan, all this creative team, and also the dancers. And I was surprised that the dancers, well maybe because the dancers are teachers – they are high-school kids' teachers; teaching history, teaching math – and at the same time, I was sort of giving a space from the beginning of the process to involve them in the discussion. So that's really exciting for me. And it's just become something that is in habit during my process. Instead of, you know, before it was transferring the movement, replicating... How you feel? Can you do that? Can you do this? Blah blah blah... But now it's more about that interacting, discussion, and also something that is very important that can be discussed can be shared, with all of the team.

Melanie Lane: Yeah, I think maybe to sort of wrap it up, because I think we have to finish soon, but just touching on a couple of things that stood out to me in the last things you said was this idea of purity and rawness, is something I really admire in your work. And also, in my time that I've spent in Indonesia, is something that I long for in my own work, and I'm still searching for. Yeah... More to dream into.

Eko Supriyanto: We will continue.

Melanie Lane: To be continued, yeah.

Estelle Conley: Thank you both. I'm just going to jump in just so we can move into a Q&A. So, as you've been talking, people have been writing in questions through the Q&A section. So thank you everyone that has submitted a question, and if you'd still like to ask a question, you can just jump into the Q&A and type something in.

So, our first question is to Melanie from Tina Alenin... "Eko speaks of cultural understanding when working outside his culture, and you've talked a little bit about being a guest in another country. So I'm interested to hear about your experiences working with the cultural peoples and dance makers of these lands."

Melanie Lane: Yeah, I mean I haven't worked for a choreographer, a First Nations choreographer, but I have worked with people, First Peoples, in the last years, as a collaborator and as a dancer. However, I've spent most of my professional life overseas. So I spent, I think from graduating until 2015, I was based in Europe. So I've still got a lot to learn being here on country, and it's something that I want to invest more time in definitely.

Estelle Conley: Thanks, Melanie. And a question to both of you from Carol Brown, thanks Carol... "You mentioned different gender relations – sister, brother – how do gender roles and sexualities inform how you navigate cultural differences between Australia and Indonesia?"

Eko Supriyanto: Mel first? Yeah, Mel first.

Melanie Lane: Me first? That's quite a big question... Yeah, I mean I think that I have a really, I experience a different sense of cultural awareness when I'm in Indonesia and there's a lot of, not a lot, but a sensitivity to the body, and to.... as a woman.... It's interesting, I think as a woman there are some ways in which I shift the way I present myself, or the way I interact. Not so much in a negative way, but in more a sense of respect, I think. So, I don't know if that really answers the question, in terms of gender roles, but... Yeah, how would you feel about that Eko?

Eko Supriyanto: Well, is it Professor Carol Brown? I respect her so much. Thank you for the question. Well, of course in Indonesia, you can obviously see the imagery is man, masculinity is more powerful than woman, in every culture in Indonesia as far as I know. But, dealing with that, I think that's sort of my understanding now. For example when I did *Balabala*, it's about gender roles in Jailolo, where a woman now is forcing to be loved by the man in Jailolo. Especially that culture is really a masculine culture; woman is only play in the kitchen and serving the family, it's very obvious. But I think what I found out in *Balabala*, it's just about this group of women in one village in Jailolo, which they are all agree to be divorced women. They're all more happy to be divorced by the men, instead of being with them but still beating and hitting by these men. And that's become sort of the idea, not to mention Jailolo, even just my mother... You know, my mother passed away because of that kind of role of power of my father and my mother.

So, I see it myself, how Indonesia still that kind of power and gender is still really, really obvious... Man is really more dominant than woman. So I think that with 2 of my work *Balabala*, and now with *Ibu-Ibu Belu*, I think that's a space for me to make them – well not to make them understand – to make myself understand more the power of women is not about, or the power of gender – male or female – is not about playing physicality of that understanding the gender.

But I think deep down and philosophically in Java, during my experience of my mother, myself, is something that is just really... sort of wash out all the agenda of my father being a masculine and male in my family. And that taught me, my mother actually taught me how that in a different layer, in a different perspective, that my mother is more powerful than my father. Including in *Balabala*, as Fau for example, one of the woman in Jailolo that plays the role of this woman now, divorced woman, to fight again. But nothing fighting using this violence. But very soft power that can delete all this understanding of this role of the men ruling the woman.

Melanie Lane: I was just going to say also that having spent time in Sumatra as well, where there's a much more matriarchal culture, was really interesting to experience that. Indonesia is not just one culture, it's so many diverse cultures, and there are different sort of systems in relation to gender. And so, for example in Sumatra – in Minang culture – the woman holds a lot of power actually. So I think

it's very complex... I think it's difficult to say Indonesia and Australia, because there's so much complexity in both of those places.

Eko Supriyanto: Yeah, like in Belu for example, the role power of the woman is really taking care of all the kids. Which is their part of it, which is nothing against something that is really gender role of men and women. They play the role of the economy because they making the tenun, the weaving. So the tenun is actually paying more power of the family, that can live for the whole family. And Likurai is the dance that is really engaging and showing a lot of power of the woman. Through the family, through the community, and through the ritual activities for these tribes and these rumah adat in Belu. So, looking at that, it's not just about physical role or sexuality of that male-dominant or female-dominant... but I think there's a lot of complexity around that, that can be researched and discussed more, even deeper. And it's just really exciting to have this understanding in my own country.

Estelle Conley: Thank you. I think this will probably be the last question that we have time for. This question's coming from Karen Bursens... "I loved hearing your discussion, and your thoughtfulness and consideration of confronting your sense of your selves in each space that you find yourselves in. I sense a real two-way exchange with the people you work with. Can you explain how you came to work with the different groups in the first place? Were you invited by them, or did you seek them? Sorry if you explained this in the beginning. I'm from a medical and dance background, and find the discussion so relevant to my medical work."

Eko Supriyanto: Well, for me, I got a lot of invitations to work with. Especially for this different culture that I'm now working more focused on eastern part of Indonesia. I think because of the, at some point with like Indonesia bureaucracy – the government power and the system of the government at some point – playing the role of: You can invite me, and how much money that I will ask for... and bargaining on the position... and what I can do... Oh can you bring the international tour like Jailolo? It's really about that right now.

But for me, I also need it, to spread out of my wings again. Not only to Jailolo and other places in eastern part of Indonesia, because it's still so broad, so big. So recently I just came to Papua, and I was just really looking at, and searching and understanding the Papua and Papua New Guinea's culture... and how they can work with 5 different territories in Papua, and 2 other territories in West Papua, and 17 territories in Papua New Guinea. And understanding in that. And also looking at Belu and Timor Leste right now that I'm working on the border of Indonesia and Timor Leste, the culture that's damaged by this physical culture, physical border with Indonesia and Timor Leste. Where now the hurt, the hurtness – it's really painful – of the family that cannot come easily, doing the ritual, death ritual, birth ritual, both sides, Indonesia and Timor Leste. You know, at some point I got a lot of invitation from them, but at the same time I feel like by that invitation I can learn a lot... and getting more information, and more idea on how we can... how as an artist I can work with this understanding.

Melanie Lane: I was invited first for a couple of projects through a Belgian-German choreographer, Arko, who we've been speaking about a lot. And through those connections that I made, was invited to a number of different projects like choreographic labs, and workshops. And then I just started to apply for opportunities for myself to go there through Asia Link and Australian Arts Council. And also just through my own funding... self-funded ways to go there, yeah.

Estelle Conley: Alright. Well that brings us to the end of tonight's conversation. I think I got to most questions, but apologies to the few questions that we ran out of time to get to. I would like to take this opportunity to say a massive thank you again to Melanie and Eko for your generosity and insights over this last hour. And also to thank everyone who is zooming in to this event tonight, I really hope that you enjoyed the conversation as much as I have. Thank you again to tonight's Auslan interpreters, Dave and Nick, it's been wonderful having you.

And finally, if you have any feedback on tonight's session or Lucy Guerin's Dance Dialogues series in general, you can send an email to admin@lucyguerininc.com. We really appreciate receiving feedback and input from the community, so thank you in advance for that.

So that's all from us for this evening, so thank you again for joining us, and we'll see you all again soon. Good night.

Melanie Lane: Thank you, thanks LGI. Thank you, Eko.

Eko Supriyanto: Thank you, Mel.

Melanie Lane: Take care over there.

Eko Supriyanto: You too, thank you. Estelle, thank you so much.

Melanie Lane: Sampai jumpa lagi ya.

Eko Supriyanto: Sampai jumpa. Sehat selalu.