

## Ni Ketut Arini: A Bali Performing Arts Maestro

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### ABSTRACT

*Ni Ketut Arini, who is popularly called Mrs. Arini, is a maestro of Balinese performing arts. This article will discuss the maestro's progress, who is known as a multi-talented artist with a long history of preserving this regional performing arts. In Bali, there are many performing arts artists. However, of the many artists referred to, it seems that not many have track records throughout Mrs. Arini's career. The questions: how is Mrs. Arini's progress in preserving traditional Balinese performing arts?. This research was conducted using the life history method. The data sources for this research were Mrs. Ni Ketut Arini herself, her colleagues, her students at Sanggar Warini and related communities who were selected based on purposive sampling and snowball. All data collected through observation, interviews, and literature studies were analyzed using Bourdieu's theory of aesthetics and social action theory. The results of the study show that Ni Ketut Arini is an artist who graduated from the Indonesian Art College (STSI) in Denpasar, and most of her life has been dedicated to the preservation of Balinese performing arts. Since the age of 14, Ni Ketut Arini has mastered Balinese traditional dance. Her skill in dancing traditional Balinese dance has made Ibu Arini have many students and become a role model for artists in Bali. Mrs. Arini is known for consistently preserving traditional Balinese dance. Through the Warini Studio that she cares for, Mrs. Arini continues to strive to care for, maintain, and develop this Balinese performing art to attract Balinese cultural tourism.*

### KEYWORDS

*Ni Ketut Arini; maestro; traditional dance; Balinese performing arts.*

### INTRODUCTION

Bali is a small island that has the charm of stunning natural beauty (Pradana and Prawati, 2017). Besides having interesting natural potential, the Balinese Hindu people have a very expressive and distinctive cultural tradition. This expressive culture is expressed in the form of cultural arts (Geriya, 1985). The characteristics and personalities of the Balinese people are the potential, talents, and talents of Balinese arts and culture. This is in accordance with the expectations of Ida Bagus Mantra as the former Governor of Bali that Bali must be built with personality, namely by increasing the economy of the Balinese people while strengthening Balinese cultural and religious life. The personality in question is Bali, which has a culture in the form of art based on Hinduism. The relationship between Hinduism and art in Bali cannot be separated because religious teachings can foster a very deep sense of art in society. The art meant here is not art in a narrow sense, but aesthetics. The definition of aesthetics according to Mantra (1996) is beauty that can encourage people to be creative,

dynamic in their attitude, achieve inner satisfaction, and sharpen their intuition. A dynamic attitude encourages creativity. Humans can progress and be respected if they show high creativity.

Art is a container that contains elements of beauty created and realized by humans that can give pleasure and inner satisfaction. Various cultural arts live, grow, and develop in the lives of the Balinese people, including painting, sculpture, craftwork, and performing arts. According to Bandem (1996:9), "performance art" is an art whose expression is carried out by showing it in front of an audience, moving in space and time. Performing art is art that is momentary, not durable, and easily lost after it is performed. The performing arts of Bali that are sustainable in Balinese society include karawitan, puppetry, and dance.

Balinese performing arts can be divided into three categories based on their function: wali, bebal, and balih-bali. Wali and bebal arts include types of art that generally have religious values and are very sacred because they involve sacred and auspicious objects. Usually, the staging of this performing art should not be arbitrary but must be at a predetermined time and place and related to the implementation of ritual ceremonies. Meanwhile, the art of balih-bali includes types of art that emphasize more aesthetic values in a secular atmosphere. Bandem (1983) says that this balih-bali art can be performed anytime and anywhere without any time, place, or event restrictions that are too binding. This art form is most widely displayed in society as entertainment or spectacle.

Balinese ethnic art is an important part of the life of the Balinese Hindu people (Pradana and Pratiwi, 2020). Cultural arts, which have become part of Balinese tradition and religious life, have a function in strengthening social integration as well as serving as a means for education and entertainment (Sedyawati, 2006; Pradana and Ruastiti, 2022). The Balinese people realize that art and culture are their main wealth.

In Bali, Regional Regulation No. 5/2020 states that Balinese cultural arts are the main capital for the development and sustainability of Balinese cultural tourism. Therefore, the Balinese people continue to care for and develop their traditions, arts, and culture. The artistic interests and talents that have been inherent in the life of the Balinese people are continuously explored, fostered, and developed by Balinese artists, both natural artists who are skilled not because of the results of studying at formal art educational institutions and skilled artists who have studied at a formal art school. In the lives of the Balinese people, the cultivation of the arts takes place naturally, supported by the banjar and local traditional villages as well as local art groups.

Balinese artists have become guardians who ensure the continuity of Balinese traditions, arts, and culture. One of the Balinese artists who is exemplary in maintaining Balinese traditions, arts, and culture is Ni Ketut Arini. This artist, born in 1943, is known as an artist who masters Balinese traditional dance very well. This article specifically discusses the figure of Ni Ketut Arini in the dynamics of Balinese traditional performing arts and her work as a maestro of traditional Balinese performing arts.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses the life history method. This life history method is used to identify cultural patterns that have influenced public opinion in Mrs. Arini's environment in the arts. Campbell (1999) says that every decision taken by a person will be able to influence the person's life journey. In this context, life history is used to reveal the meaning behind Mrs. Arini's life experience as a Balinese performing arts maestro. Mrs. Arini was chosen as the object of this life history research because she is considered to have succeeded in advancing her career as a major and influential artist in this area. This life history research uses

qualitative data to be able to uncover, understand, and describe the meaning in depth and comprehensively of Mrs. Arini's life as a maestro of Balinese performing arts.

The data sources for this research were Mrs. Ni Ketut Arini herself, her colleagues, her students at Sanggar Warini, and related communities who were selected based on purposive sampling and snowball. A field study was conducted to see how Mrs. Arini was doing in art. Research data was also collected through interviews with other Balinese artists who knew about Mrs. Arini's career as a Balinese performing arts maestro. The collected data were then analyzed using Bourdieu's (1990) theory of social action and aesthetic theory. According to Bourdieu's theory (1990), a person's existence is determined by their capital plus their mental structure and field of struggle. Furthermore, aesthetic theory is used to explain the philosophy regarding the nature and perception of beauty, especially in the Balinese performing arts that Mrs. Arini is involved in. Junaidi (2016) says that by understanding the philosophy of art that a society is involved in, it will be possible to understand the meaning of that art for the community concerned. All data collected through observation, interviews, and literature studies were analyzed using Bourdieu's theory of aesthetics and social action theory.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Ni Ketut Arini, As Balinese Performing Arts Maestro***

The dynamics and sustainability of Balinese performing arts are determined, among other things, by the supporting artists (Pradana, 2018). In general, the existence of artists in Bali can be grouped into three groups : First, she is a natural artist who has talents, interests, and artistic talent that she was born with. Her artistic knowledge and skills are honed and continue to develop through an educational process that takes place informally within her family and surrounding community. Second, there are artists who pursue formal art education at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Third, natural talent artists who are strengthened by formal education so that those involved not only have theoretical knowledge but also practice that knowledge in real life. Ni Ketut Arini is a Balinese artist who obtained both informal and formal education (Sugita, 2021).

The artist, who was born in Denpasar on March 15, 1943, is an artist who has interests, talents, and abilities that have been honed since childhood. Since childhood, she has been raised by an artist family. Her father, I Wayan Saplug, was known as an expert *gamelan* player. Meanwhile, her mother, Ni Ketut Samprig, is a talented *arja* dancer and well known in the Balinese traditional art community. In addition, there is an older brother who is also known as an art freak, I Wayan Dia, who is a puppeteer and mask dancer in Jakarta. Not only did her family have a stake in forging his artistic skills, but Ni Ketut Arini also pursued knowledge of Balinese arts and culture with other artists, like learning to dance with Mario in Tabanan, Lokasabha in Gianyar and Biang Sengok, specifically for the Peliatan style of Legong dance.

To hone her artistic skills, Ni Ketut Arini studied art at the Bali Department of the Indonesian Kerawitan Conservatory School (*KOKAR BALI*) and the Denpasar Indonesian Art College (1960-1983). At this school, he studied Balinese dance techniques academically. This knowledge of Balinese dance theory then becomes the basis for further artistic endeavors. Experience, coupled with his academic ability, then generates thoughts about the development of Balinese dance.

**Table 1.** Ni Ketut Arini's Career Path

Time	Information
1943	Ni Ketut Arini was born in Denpasar
1957	Ni Ketut Arini became a traditional Balinese dancer
Since 1965	Ni Ketut Arini is involved in Balinese arts and culture missions abroad
1973	Ni Ketut Arini founded the Warini studio, in Denpasar
1960	Ni Ketut Arini entered the Indonesian Kerawitan Conservatory School Balinese Department
1983	Ni Ketut Arini became a bachelor of arts at STSI Denpasar
2010	Six legong dances performed by Ni Ketut Arini are documented in ISI Denpasar

A brief biography of Ni Ketut Arini is shown in Table 1. At the age of 14, or in 1957, to be precise, Ni Ketut Arini officially became a Balinese dancer when she was elected *Sang Hyang Dedari* at Banjar Pande, Sumerta Kaja Village, Denpasar-Bali. This was a matter of pride for her because dancers at that time were highly respected and considered sacred when they were about to dance. Since the age of 14, Ni Ketut Arini has also been a dance teacher at various dance studios, including the Warini studio, which she founded in 1973. The establishment of the Warini Studio is intended to maintain and develop Balinese arts and culture, especially Balinese traditional dance.

Tracing her career, Ni Ketut Arini, who later became known as the *Condong* dance maestro, created a traditional Balinese dance that tells the story of the maidservant of the king's daughter. These supporting characters are always featured in ancient Balinese dance dramas such as *Gambuh* (dance drama with dialogue), *Arja* (dance drama with singing), and *Legong* (dance accompanied by *pelegongan gamelan*). Apart from *Condong*, Ni Ketut Arini also revived the classical *Legong* dance, which was almost abandoned by her successors. In Bali, there are 14 styles of classical Legong dance, and she masters six of them : *Legong Pelayon*, *Lasem*, *Kuntul*, *Kuntir*, *Jobog*, and *Semarandhana*. Six Legong dances mastered by Ni Ketut Arini in 2010 were documented at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts (ISI) in Denpasar as part of the subject matter for students of the Department of Dance.

She taught the six dances at the Warini studio, a studio managed by Mrs. Arini. The studio's students are not only young Balinese who come from around the studio but also come from other countries such as Japan, the United States, and Switzerland. The studio, which was founded in 1973, annually graduates around 100 dance students. Ni Ketut Arini has her own way of introducing Balinese traditional dance so that her students are interested in learning Balinese traditional dance. Among them is the teaching of traditional Balinese dance with *gamelan Gong Kebyar* accompaniment. *Gong Kebyar* is a popular type of Balinese *gamelan* and is known as the identity of the Balinese people, especially in the art of music (Dibia, 2012).



**Figure 1.** The spirit of Ni Ketut Arini teaches Balinese traditional dance at Warini  
 (Source : <https://bali.jpnn.com/bali-mula/9226/>)

Since 1965, Ni Ketut Arini has been on cultural missions to various countries. Together with Rucina Balingier, one of her students from the United States, Ni Ketut Arini revitalized the works of her teacher, I Nyoman Kaler, including the *Panji Semirang*, *Margapati*, *Wiranata*, *Demang Miring*, *Candrametu*, *Puspawarna*, *Bayan Nginte*, *Kupu-Kupu Tarum*, and *Legong Keraton* dances in 2004. Ni Ketut Arini's efforts to revive a number of traditional Balinese dance works have established her as a master of Balinese performing arts. In addition, efforts to save traditional Balinese dance have produced results. This series of traditional Balinese dances is the basic material for learning in the development of traditional performing arts in Bali. Several of these traditional Balinese dance works became study material for students of the Denpasar Indonesian Art College (STSI), which is the Indonesian Art Institute (ISI) in Denpasar.

### **Discussion**

The development of tourism and modernization that has occurred intensively since the 1970–1980 decade has pushed aside the existence of local arts. Along with the entry of global culture in the form of various modern entertainment arts, including music, films, and online games, which can indirectly erode Balinese traditional arts and culture, Balinese young people are more fond of these various modern cultural arts and tend to abandon the cultural arts that were passed down by their ancestors (Ruastiti, 2020).

Various traditional Balinese performing arts are on the verge of extinction, as evidenced by the many local performing arts experiencing a crisis of artists in the midst of Bali's children being hegemonized by modern entertainment. In such a crisis, a teacher like Ni Ketut Arini rises to prominence in Balinese performing arts. Ni Ketut Arini appears as a pioneer in revitalizing the interest of young Balinese artists in a variety of traditional Balinese dances that are threatened with extinction. Animo shows a spirit of support or adaptation to participate in activities, imitate, and emulate practices (Pradana, 2022a). In addition, Ni Ketut Arini is also involved as a Balinese performing arts agent for Condong dance and Legong dance in the context of Bali tourism. Ni Ketut Arini, as a performer of Balinese performing arts, appears to have cared for and developed traditional Balinese dance and has even become one of the fighters for the sustainability of Balinese performing arts, as expressed by Made Sidia at Sanggar Paripurna, Gianyar, in 2022 :

"...I am one of the artists who admires Ms. Arini. She has inspired me and my friends as the young generation of Bali. She is a maestro of the Condong dance and the Legong dance, which are now developing as part of the performing arts of Bali tourism. "She has become a staunch supporter of the survival and revitalization of Balinese performing arts..".

Based on the informant's statement above, it can be seen that the Balinese artist confirmed that Ni Ketut Arini has become a source of inspiration for young Balinese artists. She is also known for fighting hard to bring back traditional Balinese performing arts at a time when they were in trouble.

Crisis situations are influenced by the relationship between practice and resources. Social and cultural relations with the environment chances can be both a source of motivation and a valuable resource for the specification of practices (Pradana, 2012; Pradana et al., 2016; Pradana, 2021; Pradana, 2022). According to informants, her achievement as a traditional Balinese dance maestro was achieved through her perseverance, tenacity, and persistence in learning the art of dance. Apart from formal education to perfect his theoretical abilities in the field of Balinese arts and culture, Ni Ketut Arini is an artist who studies hard and is even supported by her entire family and other artists. It was through this informal learning process

in the family environment that Ni Ketut Arini's artistic abilities matured. In line with Giddens (1998), the process of socialization and enculturation of arts and culture in an intense family environment will be able to shape one's skills. In accordance with Bourdieu's (1990) theoretical framework, the success of Mrs. Arini as a Balinese performing arts maestro is supported by intellectual capital, namely the theoretical understanding mastered. Besides being supported by habitus and opportunities provided by the family and community environment.

Ni Ketut Arini is one of the Balinese artists who fights persistently for the sustainability of traditional Balinese dance. This is clearly reflected through her efforts in introducing the Condong dance and various Legong dances to the students under her care. Where the students are not only young Balinese but those who come from abroad, Mrs. Arini also introduced her students to various types of sacred wali dances, such as the Rejang dance and balih-balihan dances, such as the Legong dance, which is staged for tourism. Legong dance has proven to be a part of the tourism performing arts menu, which is presented to tourists in the palace environment, hotels, and at similar tourism entertainment events (Ruastiti, 2010).

Both formal and informal education seem to have produced many artists in Bali. They develop Balinese arts and culture to be staged in the Bali Arts Festival (PKB), which is held every year by the district or city government and the Bali provincial government. It is through this PKB event that Balinese cultural arts are explored, maintained, and developed so that innovative works appear.

The creation of new dances accompanied by Gong Kebyar is one of the Balinese art-cultural innovations. Based on the concept of cultivation, there are two types of dance, namely traditional and non-traditional dances. Traditional dance is a dance that has been standardized and has certain rules. Within a certain period of time, it was agreed that the art of innovation would be passed down from generation to generation. This dance has experienced a long journey, is based on strong traditional patterns, has a strong regional character, and has a distinctive style built through the nature and character of motion that has existed for a long time. Non-traditional dance, on the other hand, is dance that is not bound by rules; this dance is a type of renewal dance that expresses a more personal style. This dance is a form of self-expression, has rules that are looser but conceptually still have rules. This non-traditional dance is a form of renewal, or better known as the "new creation dance" (Nareswari, 2020).

New dance creations are created based on cultural capital, social support, and market opportunities. Unique cultural elements have tourism potential (Pradana, 2019). The Legong dance that has been preserved by Mrs. Arini since 2010 has become a valuable discourse or reference for the development of this regional traditional dance for tourism. In accordance with Bali Regional Regulation No. 5 of 2020, the type of tourism being developed in Bali is cultural tourism, namely tourism that highlights elements of Balinese culture. The traditions of Balinese life and the potential for Balinese art and culture are the main capital for Bali tourism. As stated by Ardika (2004), among the cultural components that have an attraction for tourists visiting Bali are museums, architecture, Balinese Hindu religious ceremonial traditions, and various Balinese arts and culture including performing arts in this area. In this regard, the existence of Sanggar Warini under the care of Ni Ketut Arini has made a real contribution to efforts to maintain, explore, and develop Balinese performing arts. Here it is known that, through the Warini Studio that she is caring for, Ni Ketut Arini is an artist who directly has a stake in maintaining the sustainability of Balinese cultural tourism.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that as a Balinese performing arts artist, Ni Ketut Arini, who was born in 1943, dedicated most of her life to the development of Balinese performing arts. Ni Ketut Arini, who is an artist who graduated from the Indonesian Art College (STSI) in Denpasar, has spent most of her life dedicated to the preservation of Balinese performing arts. Since the age of 14, Ni Ketut Arini has mastered Balinese traditional dance, such as the *Legong Pelayon*, *Lasem*, *Kuntul*, *Kuntir*, *Jobog*, and *Semarandhana* dances. Her skill in dancing Balinese traditional dance has made Ibu Arini have many students, and she has even become a role model for artists in Bali. Since she was young until now, Mrs. Arini is known to be passionate about preserving this regional traditional dance.

Ni Ketut Arini mastered many classical Balinese dances, both theoretically and practically. Mrs. Arini has been teaching her foster children these traditional dances since she was 14, and they are frequently staged as tourism performing arts. This artist, who masters various legong dances, has become a maestro of Balinese performing arts. Ni Ketut Arini, a Balinese performing arts maestro, has served as an inspiration to young Balinese artists and has contributed discourses and references on Balinese classical dance. Through the Warini Studio under her care, Ni Ketut Arini continues to care for, maintain, and develop this regional performing art. Her work in the arts since he was young is understood indirectly to have helped maintain the sustainability of Balinese art and culture.

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