

**Indigo Moon does not perform traditional puppet shows but is inspired by traditional as well as contemporary techniques.**

**Wayang Golek** is a traditional form of puppetry from Sunda, West Java. Unlike the better-known leather shadow puppets (*Wayang Kulit*) which are found in the rest of Java and Bali, these puppets are made from wood, and being three-dimensional do not use a screen. They simply use a banana palm in which the puppets stand, behind which one puppeteer (or *dalang*) is accompanied by his *gamelan* percussion orchestra with (in Indonesia) up to 20 musicians. The drummer guides the musicians. He in turn is guided by signals that the *dalang* gives whenever there is a change of mood or pace required.

Traditionally these shows are performed for at least six hours during the night, attracting an adult audience of all social classes. Originally these shows might be performed, (for example), to appease the gods, to offer thanks or ask protection for a harvest or to exorcise evil spirits. They also continue to be performed at circumcision or wedding parties, or to events such as the anniversaries of large businesses. The wayang golek performance becomes a social event around which there may be many stalls selling refreshments and other small items, and the audience come and go as they please, watching or listening from all sides. They particularly enjoy the clown scenes, when much tomfoolery and satire take place.

The stories are usually based on the epic stories of the *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*, originally Hindu epics from India, which later were adopted and adapted to suit Muslim teachings. (It is generally only in Bali where *Wayang Kulit* are still used within the Hindu faith).

The six hour show of Wayang golek does not tell the whole story of these epics. Instead one story might be chosen from a tiny part of the whole epic, and there are many stories within stories. Sometimes new stories are also created, but the history of the characters in the original epic is always respected. After a new story has been performed for some years, this too might become a part of the established *fact / storybank (pakem)* which other *dalang* then draw upon. Wayang Golek storytelling is therefore like a tree that continues to grow many new branches from the same long-established trunk.

In Indonesia many people are familiar with the different types of character which can be recognised by the size, shape colour and angle of their eyes and nose and the way they walk, talk, sing, dance and fight. It is a highly respected art form, and continues to thrive as a vibrant living tradition, offering a coded philosophy within which there is something for everyone, rich or poor, politician or artist alike.

Anna Ingleby