

A photograph of a performance in a muddy field. In the center background, a figure made of straw stands on a pile of straw, with a woven ball head featuring a sad face and several long, thin sticks radiating from it like a sun. The ground is muddy and covered with many small, colorful plastic caps (red, blue, yellow, black). Four people are in the foreground, partially submerged in the mud. On the left, a person in a patterned sarong and white headband is in a dynamic pose. In the center, a person in a black tank top and dark pants is also in a dynamic pose. On the right, two more people are in dynamic poses, one with arms outstretched and the other with one arm raised. The background is a lush green hillside with trees and vegetation.

# Amerta Movement as an Expression of Dialogue

by Alexander GB

**THE MAIN** argument of this essay is that the movement in Joged Amerta is a form of dialogue—or a dialogue expressed through movement. This essay is based on my experience participating in Joged Amerta training with Suprpto Suryodarmo, also known as Pak Prapto, who introduced me to the practice. The foundation of Joged Amerta lies in everyday bodily movements such as walking, standing, sitting, crawling, lying down, and the transitions between these movements—similar to how children play or stretch upon waking.

The movements of Joged Amerta are always intended as a way of greeting others; therefore, movement serves as embodied communication or dialogue. One of the fundamental conditions of dialogue is the recognition and acceptance of the existence of other subjects. In other words, communication can only take place when subjects engage as equals—subject to subject, rather than subject to object.

This is how we should position other subjects in relation to ourselves. These “others” can include people, rocks, plants, reliefs, narrative texts, voices, colors, temperatures, textures, the sky, clothing, or anything else that acts as a partner in dialogue. A movement can be likened to a word, phrase, or sentence. Therefore, a series of movements can be understood as sentences, metaphors, or symbols. Dialogue continuously evolves alongside movement throughout the practice.

As the embodiment of dialogue, Amerta’s movements are not based on fixed forms or codified practices. Instead, they are guided by fundamental concepts that generate specific and authentic movements in response to particular spaces and times (contexts). As an expression of dialogue or statement, these movements emphasize the principles that give rise to them. This systematic approach seeks to uncover primal movements inherent in all people and cultures—movements that are both natural and proportional.

From my perspective as a theater actor, Joged Amerta offers a unique approach to exploration and improvisation. In theater, improvisation always occurs within the framework of a theme or a predetermined

form, such as discovering movements in daily or extra-daily life. Improvisation is therefore guided by imagination, narrative, or a particular situation. In other words, theatrical improvisation is a practice of movements originating from something imagined beforehand. In contrast, in Joged Amerta, movements arise from the present moment—here and now (in place and space). The practice is also directed toward discovering the individual's authentic bodily movements (reflection-interrogation).

Thus, Joged Amerta functions as an exploratory process that enhances spatial awareness, interrogates personal movement, and, most importantly, facilitates dialogue. It is not merely a way to develop new, specific, and fresh referential movements; beyond that, it is a practice of exploring and discovering truthful, authentic, and spontaneous expression.

The practice of Joged Amerta provides an opportunity to cultivate awareness within boundaries, yet these boundaries can be altered. The principle of Joged Amerta is rooted in the concept of omah, which represents the relationship between microcosm (jagad cilik) and

macrocosm (jagad gede). The concept of life itself emerges from nyawiji (unity), lingga-yoni (phallus-vulva), circulation, conflict, and the ongoing dynamic of thesis-antithesis moving toward synthesis. A new synthesis can only be achieved through sincere dialogue.

Simply put, I understand Joged Amerta as a movement practice that perceives, comprehends, experiences, and gives meaning to the world through movement. Movement is a form of dialogue—a response to the presence of other subjects in a specific space and time. It can also be understood as an expression and, simultaneously, as a process of reading-tuning (nglaras), both vertically and horizontally—a dialogue between one individual (subject) and another (subject) or between an individual (microcosm) and nature (macrocosm).

In developing Joged Amerta movement, Mbah Prapto emphasized the attitudes of samadhi (deep meditation), sujud (prostration), and manembah (devotion), integrating them with the concepts of choicing, choosing, and composition in living measurement. Choicing refers to the space of choices; choosing means having the awareness to decide on a composition, and living measurement is the awareness of

proportion based on the body's dimensions (length of arms, legs, etc.). These concepts help us recognize points of freedom where we can alter composition, ultimately teaching awareness in taking, carrying, and placing things in their proper proportions.

Joged Amerta trains us to recognize and experience our unique personal transformation within a given context—to feel ourselves in a particular moment while simultaneously acknowledging our existence within a broader ecological system. It fosters a shared awareness between the micro and the macro.

The concept of dialogue in Joged Amerta creates an open space where all elements—humans, objects, and other beings—can mutually respect one another's existence. It encourages communication through dialogue. The core idea is recognizing something beyond ourselves as a subject, as a living entity. This practice opens possibilities for dialogue, challenges our creativity to keep moving, and ultimately allows us to generate new ideas through this process (creating something).

During a practice session in Suku, my body was positioned at a certain point in the temple area. My feet touched the grass and soil, making

me aware of the presence of other elements—the statues, reliefs, temple structures, history, embedded stories, trees, mist, sky colors, atmosphere, and more.

As Mbah Prapto expressed, nature—or something beyond us—is always communicating with us. Through Joged Amerta practice, we gradually build a dialogue with all these elements. If we engage in Sensing-Reading-Tuning correctly, it naturally redirects our awareness back to the body, intuition, and our primordial human essence—our senses, body, and movement—while allowing the mind (which usually dominates our lives) to rest and become passive. In these moments, the mind functions only as an observer, mapping and creating pathways for possible communication with everything around us.

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Thus, the process of Reading-Sensing-Tuning is a way to restore the optimal function of our senses and intuition through an intentional process of *nglaras* (harmonizing frequencies), reaffirming the importance of maintaining a harmonious relationship with nature and all other beings.

The smallest form of movement in *Joged Amerta* is the movement of the joints. Mbah Prapto referred to joints as “mouths”—through the movement of the joints, particular movements or forms emerge, each carrying a specific communicative intent. Therefore, joint movement itself can be an act of expression (speaking).

Movement as dialogue was emphasized by Mbah Suprpto Suryodarmo in training sessions that amplified the idea of *Forming is Speaking*. The principle is that every form conveys something or represents how we communicate through a particular form. A form can be understood as a word, phrase, or sentence, or it may take the shape of a metaphor or symbol.

I began creating movements that formed particular shapes, paying attention to levels, volume, and other aspects—composing forms

using my feet, hands, waist, neck, and head. At times, these forms were intentional, consciously created to greet or engage, guided by the head's control. Other times, the body was allowed to move freely, to greet, and to find its own form through intuition. The movement flowed, forms continuously changed, and then came a process of recognizing and becoming aware of the shapes or movements that had been created.

In *Joged Amerta* training, one group practiced *samadhi* (deep meditation) within a circular space, integrating *manembah* (reverence in prayer), which carried the essence of soul language. The movement was primarily driven by the concept of offering, while maintaining awareness of nature and social relationships as a secondary element.

Another group practiced *samadhi* within an oval space, which aligned more with the language of nature and focused on *eresik* (purification in circulation), while also incorporating *manembah* and a sense of collective awareness.

A third group trained within a square space, exploring how *samadhi pedinan* (daily meditation) and *samadhi khusus* (focused meditation) could interact while maintaining reverence and purification. These last

two groups emphasized shared awareness—both with nature and fellow humans—creating a bridge for cooperation (collaboration).

Training refines and positions the body as a resonance of the universe. Movement will always vary, depending on how deeply the body and consciousness perceive and respond to nature's stimuli.

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