

# MADS LANGE BICENTENNIAL EVENT

of September 17, 2007 at The Bali Purnati Center for the Arts

Purnati hosted dinner for 110 guests from **JOHOR BARU MALAYSIA** and the **FAMILY OF MADS LANGE OF DENMARK** with a special performance created by Purnati in collaboration with **I Made Sidia** and members of **Gunung Jati Teges**, the world premiere and first draft of a work in progress which is based on The Life and Times of the Danish adventurer Mads Lange on the island of Bali during the years 1839 to 1856

Tuan Lange (A Topeng/Mask Drama in Six Short Historical Scenes)  
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**Scene 1: Departure and Arrival:** Mads Lange and his fellow sailors sail from Denmark to India and then on to the island of Lombok where their ship is greeted by Balinese in jukung canoes. The Lange sailing ship is carried by Lange. Inside the sailing ship are other bule sailors (small wayang-like figures that represent bule sailors). The Balinese carry and dance with jukung canoes and lead Lange to shore where they welcome Lange to Lombok with offerings. After arriving Lange establishes a camp on Lombok, starts to do business there with no problems.

**Scene 2: Confrontation and a War on Lombok:** All is happy on Lombok until the two Rajahs and two Bule traders there begin to argue and then go to war. A big fight/battle starts and finally Lange leaves the big fight on his white horse and escapes from Lombok to Bali on his sailing ship the Venus. He arrives on the Venus at Kuta in Bali and there he is greeted by Kuta Balinese people who are very happy that he has come to Bali from Lombok. Lange thanks God that he is in a new and friendly place where he can build a new headquarters and start a new life.

**Scene 3: Mads Lange Meets The Rajah of Kesiman:** In Bali Mads Lange sets up an office and sits down and wonders what to do on the island. One day he receives a lontar which is an invitation/undangan for him to meet the then powerful Rajah of Kesiman. He goes to Kesiman on his white horse to meet the Rajah. He is greeted at Kesiman by a royal retinue. Lange and the Rajah talk and have drinks and food with each other and at the end of their meeting the Rajah grants Lange permission to set up a trading post and home in Bali under his protection and sponsorship.

**Scene 4: The Good Life In Kuta and Bali:** Life and business are good for Lange in Bali. He has beautiful dalmatian dogs, two beautiful wives, he does good business on Bali, and he gives big parties where he plays violin for people, serves good wines and entertains both important Balinese leaders and visiting European people. He is so successful and important that he is made the Bali officer-representative for the Dutch colonial government in Batavia. He even creates a currency system in Bali which uses kepeng Chinese coins as the official currency on the island of Bali. He pays the Balinese this way for their goods and services and they are happy.

**Scene 5: Mads Lange As A Peacemaker:** The Dutch, however, want more than just North Bali which they have already captured and Lange finds out that they are threatening to invade and take South Bali too. Lange convinces the Dutch to do otherwise and instead sits down the Dutch and Balinese at a negotiating table and the final result of his mediation is a peace treaty that avoids war and gives the South Balinese another fifty years plus of freedom. After this treaty is signed everybody is happy and Mads Lange becomes a hero of the Balinese people in their fight against the Dutch colonial administrators. They toast his success in this effort.

**Scene 6: Mads Lange's Last Days:** All is fine in Bali and Mads Lange and his friends and family are happy, but one day a jealous person, nobody knows who, puts poison into a drink that Mads Lange has been served. Lange whirls around in a crazy state, looks to the sky in desperation, and finally falls and dies an agonizing death. As his body lies on a bed sad Balinese friends and family members cover him in tributes, chant prayers and say goodbye and thank you to this remarkable Danish man who came from his faraway homeland to the island of Bali.

**End of Topeng "Tuan Lange" Drama**

## A Brief Biographical Introduction to Mads Lange

**MADS LANGE (1807-1856)** was a remarkable Danish sailor and merchant who went to sea from his home town of Rudkobing in Denmark at the age of 18 and later became the most distinguished foreign resident of the island of Bali in the 19th century. He is often referred to in historical texts as "The White Raja of Bali".

Lange's life on Bali followed a series of youthful adventures at sea and about six years of work and residence on the neighboring Indonesian island of Lombok where he established a trading post in 1833. Eventually, due to financial difficulties and often violent political intrigues, Lange was forced to flee Lombok for his life so in 1839 he sailed away from Lombok and later appeared off the coast of Kuta Beach in his armed bark, the *Venus*. After being granted an audience with the Raja Gusti Ngurah Gede of Kesiman in nearby Badung-Denpasar he rode to that Raja's palace where he successfully secured permission from the Raja to build a fortified trading post in Kuta.

Thus began one of the mid-19th century's most fascinating stories of a western man in the exotic East. During Lange's 19 years of life on the island of Bali, he lived a life that most men can only dream about.

Lange was an unpretentious and practical man who knew how to take advantage of opportunities in the East without offending the "savage" princes his livelihood depended upon. At first viewed with suspicion by both the locals and the Dutch he eventually won the trust and friendship of both. His Kuta home-fortress-trading post became a well-known social salon and within its environs Lange hosted several notable scholars and other visiting dignitaries who enjoyed his extended hospitality while studying Bali and even pursuing seminal early studies of the island. Most were referred to him by Wolter Robert Baron van Hoëvell, a Dutch colonialist who like Sir Stamford Raffles had a great admiration for the Balinese. Among Lange's guests in Kuta were the brilliant German linguist R. H. Friederich (who studied Kawi and Sanskrit) and the naturalist Z. H. Zollinger. Their reports developed under Lange's patronage were among the first positive eye-witness accounts of Bali to appear in the two centuries since Dutch colonialists first appeared in Indonesia.

Lange's and Kuta's importance increased rapidly during the two decades that Lange lived and worked there. Indeed, by 1845 the once sleepy fishing village of Kuta had become the hub of a commercial empire owned and operated by the enterprising and diplomatic Lange. With a fleet of fifteen ships he was doing several million guilders a year business in trade with Java, Singapore and China. Lange engaged in the import and export of various and sundry items including Chinese brass coins (*kepeng*) that were the currency of the island, weapons for the princes' soldiers, tobacco, produce, rice and opium, as well as fine wines and liquors for everyone's enjoyment. As his influence grew his services as a mediator were repeatedly enlisted by both the Dutch and the Balinese during a series of violent conflicts. And even though he was Danish, in 1844 he was appointed as the official agent in Bali of the Dutch East Indies Government. Certainly the most prestigious event in his life and in Kuta in the 19th century was an important peace conference he proudly hosted between Balinese and Dutch colonial dignitaries in 1849. The treaty that resulted from that conference put an end to mid-19th century hostilities between the Dutch and Balinese and secured the south side of Bali an additional half century of independence.

Lange was not only an able businessman but also a dedicated *bon vivant* who enjoyed life to its fullest and also shared his bounty with friends and guests with generous grace. His home and factory which housed more than one hundred people was replete with a well-stocked wine cellar, a billiards room and a special pavilion for evening musical performances by a band in which he played violin. He was certainly the first expatriate to live like a king on the island of the gods, mixing and matching the best that Bali and the West had to offer. In the Oriental fashion he would take two beautiful wives, one a Balinese, another Chinese. A patron of the arts, he sent a number of beautiful *krises*, palm leaf manuscripts (*lontar*) and Balinese carvings to the King of Denmark and the National Museum in Copenhagen where they are still housed. Unfortunately his bounty and health declined soon after the peace conference and he would pass away in 1856 (some sources say he was poisoned by a jealous prince) before fulfilling a dream to visit Denmark one last time. His grave (marked by a white obelisk) can still be seen in Kuta in a Chinese cemetery where it is maintained by funds paid by the Danish government. The few remains of his factory and fortified trading post (which stood until a few years ago) have been completely demolished, but near the Kuta night market you can still see a small street which is identified as *Jalan Tuan Langga*.