

PRESS RELEASE



When Lengger Meets the City and Darkness in Dark Solanum +

JAKARTA – Otniel Tasman, choreographer and lengger practitioner from Banyumas, presented his latest work titled “Dark Solanum + (Beyond The Idea of Queerness)” on the GoetheHaus Jakarta stage on Friday evening, 8 August 2025. Drawing from the Banyumas lengger dance tradition, the choreography work positions the body as both an archive and an oracle: a living site where gender ambiguity, ritual, and historical resonance coalesce.

The notion of Dark Solanum was partially developed during a three-month residency from September to November 2024 in the Savvy Contemporary Berlin–REFLEKT residency organised by Goethe-Institut Southeast Asia. “Dark Solanum” was then premiered at ARTJOG, Yogyakarta, on 27 June 2025.

“Through ‘Dark Solanum’, Otniel invites us to explore how the body holds memory across geographic and spiritual boundaries. His work shows that when artists are given space to listen and experience, what emerges is not only art but a new perspective on a changing world. This is the purpose of our residency programs: to create spaces where cross-cultural encounters spark critical reflection and bold new ways of thinking,” said Dr. Marguerite Rumpf, Regional Head of Cultural Programmes at Goethe-Institut Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

“Dark Solanum becomes a field of experimentation to express the power of the body in ambiguity, darkness, and the interconnectedness between cultures. It is a cross-boundary work: between ritual and rave, between silence and noise, between the sacred body and the wild body,” said Otniel.

For Otniel, this residency period in Berlin was not only intended for production but also as a space to be fully present, a pause that gave him room for the practice of listening: to the city, to untold histories, to unfamiliar rhythms.

During the three-month residency in Berlin, Otniel spent the first month listening, observing, and experiencing a lot. He allowed himself to be open, absorbing the atmosphere of the city, and began connecting with local artists. The meetings and conversations that took place during this period expanded his network and enriched the focus of his research from Indonesia to a search for queer history and subculture in Berlin.

In the following months, he began to dig deeper—not only into history but also into his own body as a Lengger living temporarily in Berlin. He traced the intersections between West and East Germany, travelled through cities like Hamburg and Leipzig, visited World War II sites, and went to the grave of philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche—a figure he admires because Nietzsche’s book *The Gay Science* became an important meeting point in his search for body, darkness, and existence.

In Berlin, Otniel discovered the concept of queer darkness, which was previously unfamiliar to him but turned out to be closely related to the Lengger exploration process he was undergoing. The nightlife, techno culture, and bodies dancing in spaces of freedom and restlessness raised various new artistic questions.

Upon returning to Indonesia, he realized that the process of listening, exploring, and absorbing during his time in Berlin had brought up important and transformative artistic questions. From this process emerged the idea for the

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work "Dark Solanum", initially titled "Hermaphrodite", as a form of reflection and affirmation of the meaning of ambiguity in body and space within the Lengger practice he pursues.

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About Goethe-Institut

The Goethe-Institut is the Federal Republic of Germany's cultural institute, active worldwide. We promote the study of German abroad and encourage international cultural exchange. We also provide a comprehensive image of Germany through information on German political, social, and cultural life. Our various cultural and educational programs support intercultural dialogue and enable cultural participation. These programs strengthen the structures of civil society and support global mobility.

About Otniel Tasman

Otniel Tasman is a choreographer and practitioner of Lengger, a cross-gender art form from Banyumas, Central Java. Otniel is committed to gender justice and the wisdom of Lengger. Otniel's work blends traditional and contemporary approaches, and this commitment led to the founding of the Jagad Lengger Festival to preserve and promote Banyumas's cultural heritage. In 2024, Otniel published "Lengger is My Religion", a book that explores his experiences as a Lengger practitioner with the themes of body, gender, tradition, and spirituality. Otniel is currently a doctoral student at Institut Seni Indonesia Surakarta.

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