

# DIRECTORY

## Wayang Beber: Selected Groups and Museums

compiled by Daniel Smither



Urashima Taro, a painting by Dani Iswardana

*Friendship with a turtle leads a young man on a time-travel adventure. A play inspired by the Japanese tale “Urashima Taro,” adapted into Javanese theater. A memory of Tantri mythology and the legend of the turtle as the savior of the Earth and a symbol of immortality.*

### Introduction

Classic and contemporary wayang beber performances can be found in varied contexts and configurations throughout Java: independent groups, professional groups, educational programs in schools, museum programs, pedhalangan departments at ISI, etc. While every group has its own character and intentions, they all have at least two things in common: a large fabric scroll painted with images of characters and communities, and a storyteller who narrates the scrolls.

Ki Samuel Santoso Adi Prasetyo of Wayang Beber Metropolitan states that the most important thing is to be able to create your own wayang beber, including stories and plays. “For modern wayang beber groups, there is no stipulation on the number of members.” Membership of the groups themselves is quite fluid. Performers and parts are interchangeable with musicians, instruments, and even behind-the-scenes painters dipping in and out of projects as needed.

It’s less important that a group be a static, defined entity and more important that the connections within the community be maintained. Faris Wibisono of Wayang Beber Tani says, “For us, this is a collective movement. We are always supported by the community. . . . We will group together if needed to adjust to the situation. Whatever it’s called, [a group or something else,] this is a space to raise awareness and inform.”

While most groups do employ music in their performances, it is not strictly necessary, and the instrumentation used can vary widely. Some performances consist of only minimalist gamelan ensembles—gong, kenong, kendang—while others approach full gamelan

instrumentation. Some employ bamboo instruments, or more modern or Western instruments, such as keyboards or guitars—or mix all of them together.

According to Faris, the musical accompaniment is merely an introduction to the atmosphere of the story; something that sets the mood for the dhalang’s performance. The message is ultimately carried by the visuals and the dhalang’s narration. Music, however, has contributed greatly to the spread and preservation of wayang beber, especially for audiences more inclined to seek flashier, modernized performances.

This is a list of active wayang beber groups in Java as of 2023. Information about many of these groups was originally collected by Marina Pretković and Tea Škrinjarić for their article on Wayang Beber Metropolitan.

This list includes the major groups that frequently perform, a few lesser-known groups, schools where wayang beber is taught and/or performed (SMAN, SMPN, SDN), and some wayang museums with Wayang Beber collections.

— Daniel Smither

### GROUPS

#### Wayang Beber Kota (Surakarta, Central Java)

Formed in 2005, and led by painter Dani Iswardana, one of the first groups to focus on contemporary performance. Their stories tackle current social issues using traditional Panji characters.

While they initially focused on performances aimed at revitalizing and preserving wayang beber for modern audiences, they later shifted to more educational activities. Often, their performances will be held in community spaces,

schools and museums. They intend to raise awareness of wayang beber as well as highlight issues brought about by changes in society.

- [facebook.com/wayang.beberkota](https://facebook.com/wayang.beberkota)
- [instagram.com/daniiswardana/](https://instagram.com/daniiswardana/)

#### **Wayang Beber Tani (Pracimantoro, Wonogiri, Central Java)**

Led by Faris Wibisono, it was formed in 2014 as a response to the anxiety arising from the increasingly uncertain situation in rural areas of Java. The economic, political, agricultural, and social problems brought on by creeping modernity began to cause shifts away from traditional values. Wayang Beber Tani sought to become a means for young people to reconnect with the culture, art, and values of their ancestors.

Faris considers the art of Wayang Beber Tani to be a “national art rooted in Javanese culture.” Additionally, they seek to raise awareness about global problems and discuss environmental issues that affect us all. They engage with communities by offering workshops and performances, providing village assistance, and organizing discussions. With these activities, they hope to combat the anxiety of change with works of art and creativity.

- [facebook.com/variise.punggawaart](https://facebook.com/variise.punggawaart)
- [instagram.com/faris\\_wibisono/](https://instagram.com/faris_wibisono/)

#### **Wayang Beber Welingan (Surakarta, Central Java)**

This group focuses on contemporary socio-environmental educational themes. It was founded by artists concerned with the preservation of the tradition of wayang beber who also wanted to create a medium to deliver criticism about social-cultural changes and environmental issues in Indonesia. The Javanese word *welingan* means to convey the message, to inform, or to talk on moral subjects. *Welingan* is also an abbreviation of *Wayang Edukasi Lingkungan* (Environmental Education Theater).

- [facebook.com/groups/387886297905975/](https://facebook.com/groups/387886297905975/)
- [youtube.com/@beberwelingan3895/](https://youtube.com/@beberwelingan3895/)

#### **Wayang Beber Sakbendino (Pacitan, East Java)**

Led by Tri Ganjar Wicaksono, who is also a member of Wayang Beber Kota. The group was formed in 2015 to foster collaboration between traditional Indonesian and global art forms, with a special focus on the revitalization of wayang beber. Their art is informed and inspired by artists from multiple backgrounds, ranging from punk rock groups and performing artists to teachers and academics. They have collaborated internationally during residencies in Croatia, Germany, and Japan.

- [facebook.com/WBS-Brotherhood-Panji-228081021467970/](https://facebook.com/WBS-Brotherhood-Panji-228081021467970/)
- [instagram.com/wbs.brotherhood/](https://instagram.com/wbs.brotherhood/)

#### **Wayang Beber Metropolitan (Depok, Jakarta, West Java)**

The most active of the contemporary groups, they are actively engaged in educational activities, performances, and public discussions. Their aim is to expose the youthful

urban population of Indonesia to this traditional art form while raising awareness of modern issues—environmental degradation, globalization, and the need to preserve traditional Javanese culture and values.

- [open.spotify.com/show/44qIL4WMMOYw1Xi0eJRYhU?si=c8071b5084884fce](https://open.spotify.com/show/44qIL4WMMOYw1Xi0eJRYhU?si=c8071b5084884fce) (podcast)
- [facebook.com/waybemetro](https://facebook.com/waybemetro)
- [instagram.com/wayangbebermetropolitan/](https://instagram.com/wayangbebermetropolitan/)
- [youtube.com/user/waybemetro](https://youtube.com/user/waybemetro)

#### **Wayang Beber Mahesa Sura (Desa Kembang Belor, Mojokerto, East Java)**

This group grew out of the Bantengan art group from Dusun Paras. The members began to develop the group in 2019 after a *ruwatan*, a ceremony for the purification of the village; it further coalesced after a workshop on wayang beber at ISI Surakarta and a wayang beber performance in Dusun Paras. They routinely perform in residents’ homes for occasions like weddings and circumcisions.

They typically focus on more traditional stories, without a stated mission to raise awareness of socio-cultural issues like many other wayang beber groups. They have participated in significant events: the 5th World Puppet Day Performance at ISI Surakarta (2019), the Panji Nusantara Festival in Malang (2019), and the Chaitra Majapahit Festival (2019).

- [instagram.com/bantenganmahesasura](https://instagram.com/bantenganmahesasura)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=3jEL5zL9yUI](https://youtube.com/watch?v=3jEL5zL9yUI) (wedding performance)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=qVIWIGZ2pK0](https://youtube.com/watch?v=qVIWIGZ2pK0) (stage performance)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=q7\\_CS\\_J8DFY](https://youtube.com/watch?v=q7_CS_J8DFY) (performing lakon “Keong Mas” with Panji Cemeng)

#### **Wayang Beber Gremeng Tutur Bengawan Solo (Karanganyar, Central Java)**

This group was established after a collaboration between Ki Jaka Rianto (director and dhalang) and dhalang Ki Anom Sukatno for a performance of the traditional story “Panji Jaka Kembang Kuning” at an ISI Surakarta anniversary event in 2017. The result was a performance rooted in tradition, with the addition of wayang kulit and arrangements of songs that featured the vocal parts more intensely. Members consist of university professors and students. They have given a few performances combining wayang beber and wayang kulit, as well as performances mixing wayang beber with wayang golek. They sometimes add modern instruments in arrangements for gamelan and keyboards. A description of one of their performance is included in this catalog:

- [repository.isi-ska.ac.id/4697/2/Katalog Pergelaran Wayang Beber.pdf](https://repository.isi-ska.ac.id/4697/2/Katalog%20Pergelaran%20Wayang%20Beber.pdf)

#### **Sanggar Pedhalangan Pengalasan Yogyakarta (Yogya, Central Java)**

Led by Dhalang Ki Slamet Haryadi and founded in 2000, their goal is to educate students about wayang beber and wayang purwa while preserving these aspects of Javanese culture.

- [facebook.com/WayangPengalasan/](https://facebook.com/WayangPengalasan/)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=n4OMrFEI600](https://youtube.com/watch?v=n4OMrFEI600) (Performance of Lakon Gajah Gurito Lena as part of Panji International Festival 2018, with dhalang Ki Slamet Haryadi.)

### Komunitas Wayang Beber Sambang Panji (Mojokerto)

The group's performance at the 727-year celebration of Majapahit included paintings by Dani Iswardana.

- [youtube.com/watch?v=UYfpe2xqISM](https://youtube.com/watch?v=UYfpe2xqISM) (performance excerpt)
- [kebudayaan.kemdikbud.go.id/bpcbajim/pagelaran-wayang-beber-di-gaung-sakala-bhumi-majapahit-ke-727/](https://kebudayaan.kemdikbud.go.id/bpcbajim/pagelaran-wayang-beber-di-gaung-sakala-bhumi-majapahit-ke-727/) (article about the performance)

### Wayang Beber Panji Cemeng/Sanggar Panji Cemeng (Mojokerto)

A music and arts studio for children that teaches and performs wayang beber. They often collaborate with Wayang Beber Mahesa Sura, using guitars to accompany the story.

- [youtube.com/watch?v=ML8\\_VwMaQOY](https://youtube.com/watch?v=ML8_VwMaQOY) (rehearsal)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=PmBWtyMMbYg](https://youtube.com/watch?v=PmBWtyMMbYg) (performance)

## MUSEUMS

### Museum Radya Pustaka (Surakarta, Java)

One of the oldest museums in Indonesia, it dates back to 1890, and was once the residence of the Dutchman Johannes Busselaar. It houses collections from various Indonesian kingdoms, including writings in Sanskrit and Palawa script, as well as relics such as sculptures, statues, gamelan, and wayang beber scrolls.

- [indonesiakaya.com/pustaka-indonesia/museum-radya-pustaka-museum-tertua-di-indonesia/](https://indonesiakaya.com/pustaka-indonesia/museum-radya-pustaka-museum-tertua-di-indonesia/) (website)
- [instagram.com/museumradyapustakasurakarta/](https://instagram.com/museumradyapustakasurakarta/)

### Museum Wayang Beber Sekartaji (Yogyakarta, Java)

A museum in the Yogyakarta region dedicated to the preservation of and education about wayang beber.

- [wayangbeber.org/](https://wayangbeber.org/)
- [instagram.com/museumwayangbebersekartaji](https://instagram.com/museumwayangbebersekartaji)

### Museum Wayang Indonesia Wonogiri (Wonogiri, Java)

This museum collects wayang figures and art from throughout Java and Bali, as well as from outside of Indonesia. The collection includes wayang kulit, wayang golek, wayang purwa, and wayang beber.

- [instagram.com/museumwayangwonogiri](https://instagram.com/museumwayangwonogiri)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=QB7iJU2hQK4](https://youtube.com/watch?v=QB7iJU2hQK4) (museum overview)

### Museum Gubug Wayang (Mojokerto, Java)

Founded in 2015, this museum aims to educate and promote traditional arts and wayang in Java. Its collection includes gamelan, artifacts from the Majapahit era, and batik, as well as examples of wayang kulit, wayang golek, wayang potehi, and wayang beber.

- [gubug-wayang.com/](https://gubug-wayang.com/)
- [instagram.com/museumgubugwayang/](https://instagram.com/museumgubugwayang/)

## RESOURCES

### Articles

"Catalog Pergelaran Wayang Beber 4 '-karta'." Detailed description of groups and performances in four cities whose names end with "-karta." (PDF download)

- [repository.isi-ska.ac.id/4697/2/Katalog%20Pergelaran%20Wayang%20Beber.pdf](https://repository.isi-ska.ac.id/4697/2/Katalog%20Pergelaran%20Wayang%20Beber.pdf)

"Joko Sri Yono: A Preserver of Wayang Beber in Solo"

- [surakarta.go.id/?p=4428](https://surakarta.go.id/?p=4428)

Places to see wayang beber in Solo

- [travel.kompas.com/read/2023/05/14/220413527/3-tempat-melihat-wayang-beber-di-kota-solo-cerita-bergambar-kuno-nusantara?page=all](https://travel.kompas.com/read/2023/05/14/220413527/3-tempat-melihat-wayang-beber-di-kota-solo-cerita-bergambar-kuno-nusantara?page=all)

Article from ISI Yogya on the Semiotics of Wayang Beber Remeng Mangujaya

- [journal.isi.ac.id/index.php/TNL/article/download/4354/1888](https://journal.isi.ac.id/index.php/TNL/article/download/4354/1888)

### Videos

A performance of a lakon at Bejiharjo Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta, with Wayang Remeng Mangujaya. Indonesian and English subtitles.

- [youtube.com/watch?v=0gMn3XBsJ3Q&t](https://youtube.com/watch?v=0gMn3XBsJ3Q&t)

Discussion of this performance.

- [youtube.com/watch?v=ayqPLjoIZ08](https://youtube.com/watch?v=ayqPLjoIZ08)

Performance VICOLMING (Video Conference and Live Streaming) Solo

- [youtube.com/watch?v=tDh2QCyt\\_18](https://youtube.com/watch?v=tDh2QCyt_18) [youtube.com/watch?v=Xwn4Yx1g3tE](https://youtube.com/watch?v=Xwn4Yx1g3tE)

Seminar Nasional "Imaji Wayang Beber" || FSRD ISI Surakarta:

- [youtube.com/watch?v=Dxyjwdf-B0](https://youtube.com/watch?v=Dxyjwdf-B0)

Seminar on the Panji story in wayang beber of Pacitan:

- [youtube.com/watch?v=NRM77oYet0I](https://youtube.com/watch?v=NRM77oYet0I)



From the scroll for *Teror di Teror*, by Samuel S. Adi Prasetyo.