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Theatre of Animals and Gods: Zoo Animals Perform Themselves to Educate Humans

Any animal performance that takes place in a zoo raises ethical questions about both performing animals and animals used in performance, and whether they should perform to further human understanding of their lives. The Gajah (elephant) and Harimau (tiger) shows at the Bali Safari and Marine Park present dramatic plots that incorporate living animals to re-enact their species’ lives, and the conflicts they face in the wild. These two shows suggest that the zoo can be a site for a unique intersection between nature and culture through theatrical performance.

Keywords: Southeast Asian theatre, zoos, performing animals, elephant shows, human-tiger relationships

Bio:

Catherine Diamond is a professor of theatre and environmental literature at Soochow University, Taipei, Taiwan. She is the author of *Communities of Imagination: Contemporary Southeast Asian Theatres* (2012), and the director/playwright of the Kinnari Ecological Theatre Project.