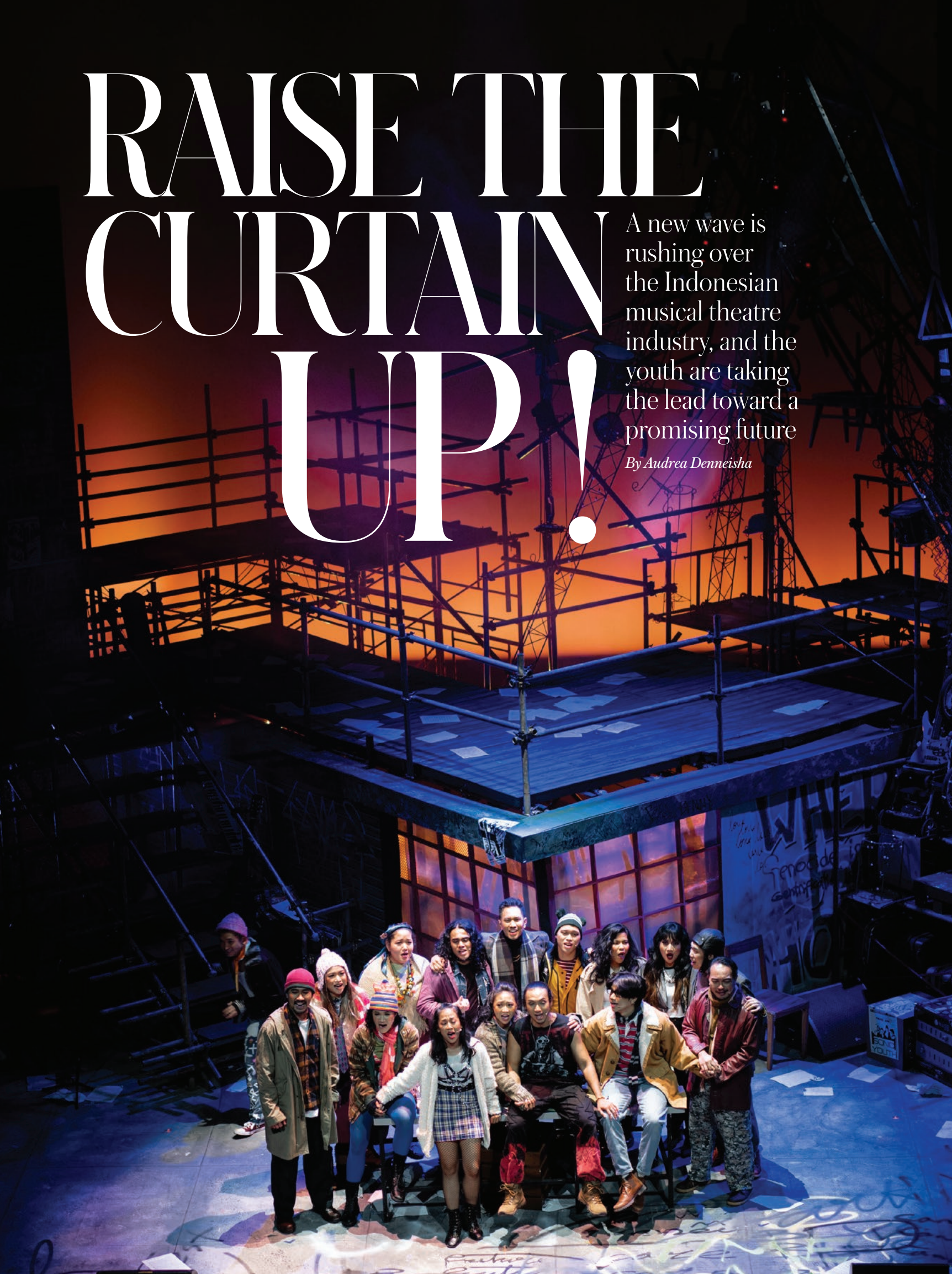


# RAISE THE CURTAIN UP!

A new wave is rushing over the Indonesian musical theatre industry, and the youth are taking the lead toward a promising future

*By Audrea Denneisha*





Indonesia has long been blessed with many artistic talents that have proven their ability to tell stories through art, music, and dance. From Wayang Kulit to Sendratari Ramayana, many theatrical performances have graced the stage throughout history. As the global theatre industry progressed and the nation grew, our artists experimented with more forms of theatrical performances and made them our own, one of them being musical theatres.

Today, a new wave has arrived in the Indonesian musical theatre industry. The younger generation is changing its course, exposing the industry to new horizons and a very promising future. Adapting the Broadway and West End style, local productions have been growing in numbers and recognition. From small-scale school plays to professionals, artists of all ages have made their mark in the industry, creating a diverse scenery ready to be explored further.

You might already be familiar with (or maybe even watched) Musikal Laskar Pelangi in 2010 and 2011, a historical production that triggered a transformation in Indonesia's musical theatre scene. Taken from Andrea Hirata's novel and hit film, Musikal Laskar Pelangi gained

massive traction from the general public, and it lasted for almost a whole month, one of the longest productions to ever exist in Indonesia.

The success of Musikal Laskar Pelangi inspired Nurul "Nuya" Susantono and Farras Safira (then 21 and 19, respectively) to create a youth-focused musical theatre community in 2013 named Jakarta Movement of Inspiration or Jakarta Movin. Armed with a burning spirit to empower the youth, Jakarta Movin was a breath of fresh air in the theatre industry, which was still dominated by the older generation back then.

After successfully creating two small-scale productions, the high school friends plucked up the courage and brainstormed their first big show in 2017, an adaptation of the Indonesian classic Petualangan Sherina. Despite facing high expectations and demands, they still managed to create a new generation of talent through online auditions for non-professionals which they educated before the show.

The first round of Petualangan Sherina was a major hit. It quickly sold out, and not only theatre lovers showed up, but the general public was intrigued to buy tickets. Their latest production, Teater Musikal Cek Toko



Sebelah, was also met with the same energy. “Indonesian film adaptations are still rarely done by other productions, so we have a good niche going on for us,” says Nuya.

By making film adaptations that are already beloved by many, Jakarta Movin invites people who are not familiar with the world of musical theatres to experience the excitement. It turned out that doing so has impacted the industry as a whole. This move has cultivated an interest in musical theatre in even more people, some of whom finally became theatregoers or even actors. “We are connoisseurs of pop culture, so we always try to see what people like us want to watch for pushing through a wider market,” Farras adds.

Pursuing a different lane is Teater Musikal Nusantara, known as TEMAN Musicals, who rocked the stage with their 100%-local-talent production of Jonathan Larson’s *RENT* last November. Founded by Chriskevin Adefrid, Ivan Tangkulung, and Venytha Yoshiantini, TEMAN was established to implement international standards in Indonesian theatre and prove that local talents can also produce Broadway-level shows. Until today, TEMAN has made three successful Broadway adaptations since its establishment in 2018.

Passionate about becoming a theatrical actor since his childhood, one of TEMAN’s founders, Chris, has noticed





a massive contrast between the industry's condition now and when he was still growing up. "10 or more years ago, I had no idea how I was supposed to make a living through theatre. But with this new era, I can safely say this industry is very promising," says Chris, who now provides theatrical lessons through TEMAN's theatre academy collaboration with Semesta Akademi.

Indonesian musical theatre has seen a great deal of evolution in the past few years, but admittedly it is still in a very early growth stage. Maintaining sustainable growth for the years to come will be challenging, but it is not a one-person job. "It's very communal. Suppose a theatre newbie watches one bad production for their very first show. In that case, it might lead to a bad perception towards the whole industry," Chris explains, adding that synergy between every player in the industry is essential to preserve a stable system.

Chris, Nuya, and Farras are just three of the many youths taking the lead for a brighter future within our nation's musical theatre industry. Through creativity and determination, there are now many platforms for aspiring young actors and actresses to grow, shine, and make a living. The fight won't stop here. The current scenery is simply a glimpse of the big things yet to come in the future of Indonesian musical theatre.