

FIELD NOTES



***Between the Threads: A
response to Mekar yang Diam***

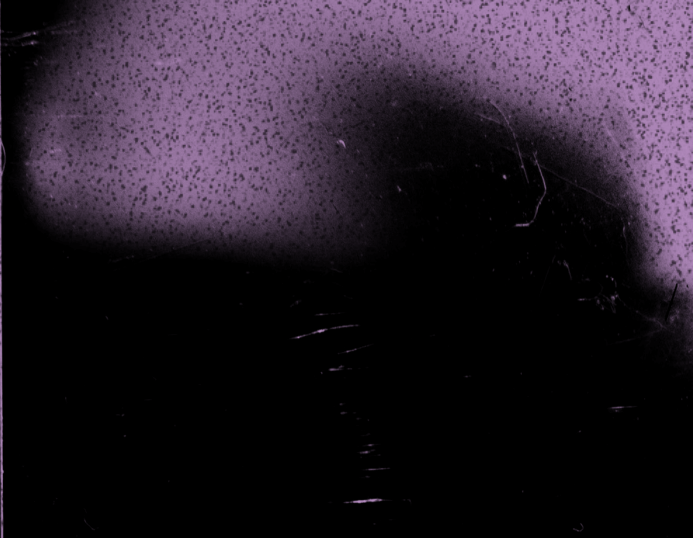
by Dr Priya Srinivasan

reflecting on

Mekar yang Diam

by Yuiko Masukawa and
Mekratingrum Hapsari

*Presented as part of Dancehouse
Season 1, 18–21 Feb, 2026*



Field Notes is a Dancehouse initiative that commissions writers, academics, and artists to produce in-depth reflections on works within the Dancehouse program. Moving beyond conventional reviews, these texts aim to extend the life of each performance and contribute to a broader conversation about contemporary dance and choreographic practice.

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Mekar yang Diam, "Silent Bloom," is an exploration of stillness, connection, and an unwinding of the warp and weft of deep ritual and experimentation. The performance rethreads the relationship between two women whose practices come from different histories of embodiment.

In a profound and much-needed inquiry, *Mekar Yang Diam* asks what it means to understand ourselves at this moment as both the sacred and profane feminine, moving away from the binary to a third space. Using the power of controlled movement, supported by the moving music score, striking costumes and lighting, the performance is an exploration of the nature of an entwined body-spirit-soul that is soft yet strong, while accessing ancestral ritual memory. It seems to offer a counter to the heightened violence stemming from unchecked Western masculine Anthropocene powers.



Mekar yang Diam (2026), by Yuiko Masukawa and Mekratingrum Hapsari. Photo by Gregory Lorenzutti.



The work asks for patience, focused attention, and presence on the part of the audience as the two women equally explore these questions before us in intimate, quiet ways before offering us a rapturous, ecstatic climax.

In a brief conversation with the choreographers and performers, Yuiko Masukawa and Mekratingrum Hapsari, I learned their rehearsal process was based on structured improvisation. The more they worked together, the more they found that ancestral memories buried deep inside their bodies revealed themselves. Whether it was the tea ritual performed by Masukawa's grandmother or Hapsari's knowledge of shamanistic practices, the paying of respect to ancestor spirits embedded within the movement ideas manifested through unexpected emergence.

The two bodies of Hapsari and Masukawa began the show separated at first and then slowly entwined with minimal touch, as if moving through energetic spaces between bodies. The addition of the main ritual using diagonals and squares, embedding incense that transformed the space into olfactory immersion, with flower petals guiding the path towards the ancestors who have been patiently waiting, and the painstakingly long process of putting on the "nails" one by one, kept us waiting in anticipation.

Both Hapsari and Masukawa said they were not expecting what came from the process; that is, the surprise of finding a home for oneself within the practice of engaging with the other. Masukawa said that learning ballet, a Western form, meant that there was little room for learning "Japanese" dance. Hapsari also mentioned that there were always expectations for Asian bodies from specific locations to "perform" that cultural identity. They were both surprised by what emerged when they researched the ideas that came from their practice together.



Mekar yang Diam (2026), by Yuiko Masukawa and Mekratingrum Hapsari. Photo by Gregory Lorenzutti.

The climax of the work came from allowing their bodies to lose control, perhaps to the ancestral memories that manifested on their bodies and animated them. It built in volume, both sonically and physically, manifesting as a large energy, almost as if a creature was birthed from the unconscious spectral body of haunting. The climax felt as if the female shamans who have gone before emerged when the world is imbalanced and needs order to restore the chaos created by malignant male violence. The two then become one; the binary moves into a third space, an unexpected creature.



Mekar yang Diam (2026), by Yuiko Masukawa and Mekratingrum Hapsari. Photo by Gregory Lorenzutti.

Ultimately, it seems to me that Mekar yang Diam asks what power might look like when two extraordinary artists explore Japanese and Indonesian contemporary, classical, and folk practices through intercultural inquiry from an equitable perspective. Supported by Lucy Guerin Inc and Ekos Dance Company, and continuing the legacy of Australian Asian engagement by these two companies, it is even more refreshing and powerful to see the nature of collaboration unfold from such a unique perspective, offering us a soothing balm and utopic hope at once to the chaotic crises we are all in.



Mekar yang Diam (2026), by Yuiko Masukawa and Mekratingrum Hapsari. Photo by Gregory Lorenzutti.

Mekar yang Diam was commissioned by LGI as part of the Naarm/Solo Dance Exchange 2024-26. The Naarm/Solo Dance Exchange is presented by LGI in collaboration with EkosDance Company. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body. It is supported by Playking Foundation and WXYZ Studios.

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