



Photo: MORARRI EHSANI The Star

## Taking a trip

Masakini Theatre Company's *Malaysia Kita* takes you on a journey through a shadowplay wonderland. >2

STAR2, SUNDAY 20 MARCH 2016

### 2 arts

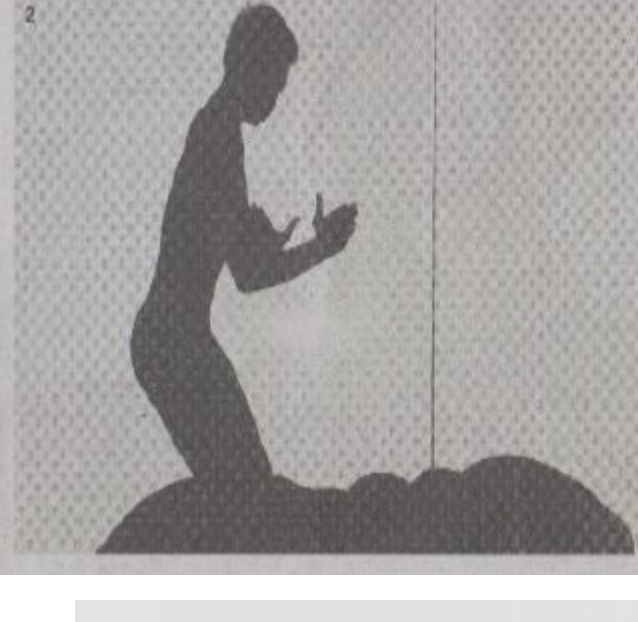


1 Masakini Theatre founder and director Sabera Shaik has a passion for telling stories through shadow theatre.

2 *Malaysia Kita*, the third instalment in Masakini Theatre's Waway series, is brought to life by 16 actors and professional dancers.

3 Masakini Theatre weaves together heritage and culture in this *Malaysia Kita* tale, set in present day Malaysia.

— Photos: MORARRI EHSANI The Star



## Shadows in the light

Shadow theatre is given a new lease of life in *Malaysia Kita*.

By **ROLIWEI LUN**  
star2@star.com.my

It sounds like a story like any other: let's have two people jump into a car and explore the country together, make stops at all the must-visit tourist spots, but also uncover lesser-known gems along the way.

Typical? Think again.

There will be no dialogue, no narration, and no text to help the plot move along. You won't even see the actors' faces or the clothes that they are wearing.

Instead, Masakini Theatre Company founder Sabera Shaik, 63, has set out to craft a tale from light and shadows, shapes and sounds. Sixteen actors and dancers have come together to weave magic behind the screen and beyond, in the company's latest shadow theatre production, *Malaysia Kita*. It is the third instalment in the Waway Series.

The first, *The Story Of Kuala Lumpur*, was staged in 2012. Followed by *Malaysian Stories* last year.

"All of Masakini Theatre's produc-

tions are very much focused on Malaysia and telling Malaysian stories. The theme of *Malaysia Kita* is no different. But instead of looking at stories from the past, we are going to delve into the present this time," says Sabera of the show's setting.

Part revelation, part metamorphosis, and part journey of self-discovery, *Malaysia Kita* brings audiences on a whirlwind one-hour journey to every state in the country.

The ancient art of shadow play is once again thrown into sharp relief in this show, offering a unique insight into this country we call home, presented in a familiar art form that has been given an innovative twist by Masakini Theatre.

Be blown away by a cave exploration, try your hand at polo, see your patience in our notorious traffic jams, and watch the infamous mat rempit vobla by.

Go on a river cruise and get up close and personal with a larger-than-life prawns, immerse yourself in the hustle and bustle of Chow Kit Road and then, when the sun sets,

*Malaysia Kita* uses the human form to create movement and shadows, providing an unforgettable story about our beloved country.

STAR2, SUNDAY 20 MARCH 2016



head on over to Kuala Selangor for the breathtaking fireflies.

A visit to a national park also means saying hello to all creatures great and small. And while you are at it, why not scale Mount Kinabalu and touch the sky?

More often than not, a shadow theatre show involves puppetry and cut-outs, but Masakini Theatre has spent many years exploring the possibilities of the human form in telling stories through shadow, silhouette and movement.

"Masakini's interpretation uses the human form as its medium to craft everything audiences will see on the stage. A certain element of contortionism is required from the actors to ensure the realism of the story they are telling," says Sabera.

At a rehearsal last week, the actors spent considerable time perfecting their take on squids propelling themselves lazily through the depths of the ocean, complete with wriggly tentacles.

Behind the screen, they took on the role of contortionists, twisting and holding somewhat bizarre poses to collectively form a coherent form when viewed from the opposite side of the screen. In a blink of an eye, they switched from marine creatures to a tapir ambling in the wild, then morphed into a car ... and then a puffer fish.

*Malaysia Kita*, directed by Sabera and Chi Azim, is brought to life by nine actors who have teamed up with seven dancers from local dance company Dua Space. It is the second time Masakini Theatre and Dua Space Dance Theatre are collaborating on such a project.

*Malaysia Kita*'s music is composed by musician and composer Kevin Vong,

with choreography by Anthony Meh and Aman Yap of Dua Space Dance Theatre.

"Having dancers on the team brings a different sort of synergy behind the scenes, which I like. I also think having them on board inspires the actors to push themselves further," explains Sabera, before adding that it is indeed a big challenge to put together a show of this nature.

And she doesn't just mean physical strength; she believes that being part of a shadow theatre show requires so much more than that.

"The actors, whose ages range from 21 to 37 years old, had to do lots of stretching and strength exercises so that they would be supply enough to meld with the dancers. But the mental aspect is also important, especially as we practise up to four hours a day, and sometimes more," she shares.

As to what Masakini Theatre has up its sleeve, Sabera already has big plans for the next performance that will be partially presented outdoors, though she is keeping mum on what exactly this entails. But one thing's for sure — audience participation is most welcome.

**Malaysia Kita will run at Auditorium Bandaraya, Jalan Raja Laut in Kuala Lumpur from March 30 to April 3 at 8.30pm. Tickets for the Kuala Lumpur shows are priced at RM82 and RM52. It will also be shown at Auditorium D'Sury, Kompleks JKKK Negeri Sembilan, Jalan Sungai Ujong in Seremban on April 8-9 at 8.30pm. Tickets for the Seremban shows are RM22. To purchase tickets or for more information, visit [www.masakinitheatre.com.my](http://www.masakinitheatre.com.my).**