

## Retrospective process of creating pencak silat artistic performance for beginners

Kurniati Rahayuni<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Sport Coaching Education, State University of Malang Indonesia

\*Corresponding author: [kurniati.rahayuni.fik@um.ac.id](mailto:kurniati.rahayuni.fik@um.ac.id)

### Abstract

As an activity, pencak silat has four dimensions: as a sport, as a self-defense discipline, as a mental-spiritual training and and as an art. As an art form, pencak silat can be a cultural performance accompanied by music. The appearance of pencak silat as an art performance can provide entertainment based on traditional arts and culture and can be performed at various national and international ceremonial events, and recently competed officially under category of solo creative performance. This paper is part of the report of a community service which was carried out with the aim of socializing and educating pencak silat as artistic performance for the Indonesian community living in Singapore. The activities were pencak silat artistic performance and a short workshop on artistic pencak silat. The highlight of this paper is in the retrospective accounts on creating the pencak silat as part of artistic performance, which involving several processes such as: 1) Determining the theme of the performance; 2) Determining the music to accompany the pencak silat performance; 3) Process of developing the movement choreography; 3) Simulation and dry run. Considering pencak silat as a growing practice in Indonesia and Internationally, this retrospective process of making pencak silat artistic performance has been recorded and written as it might be beneficial as reference for researcher, teacher, pencak silat coaches and athletes when creating pencak silat artistic performance.

**Keywords:** : pencak silat, art, music, dance, performance, Indonesia

Copyright © 2025 Author(s)



Received: 03 05 2025

Revised: 07 05 2025

Accepted: 13 05 2025

**Authors' Contribution:** A – Conceptualization; B – Methodology; C – Software; D – Validation; E - Formal analysis; F – Investigation; G – Resources; H - Data Curation; I - Writing - Original Draft; J - Writing - Review & Editing; K – Visualization; L – Supervision; M - Project administration; N - Funding acquisition

## INTRODUCTION

Pencak Silat is a multidimensional practice which encompasses four different dimensions which each of them has rich and diverse nature and application: 1) it serves as a sport to enhance health and vigor; 2) it serves as a self-defense discipline to protect human from harms; 3) it is also a mental-spiritual means of training to strengthen character; and 4) it serves as an art in the form of movements which could be accompanied with music (IPSI, 2023; Rahayuni, 2014a). Each of these dimensions offers unique benefits and experiences to its practitioners. Each of the dimension has become topic of research and widely published, except in the last dimension of pencak silat as an art. Pencak Silat as an artistic movement is when the movements of combat combined with music, artistic and colourful costumes, performed in a choreographed scenario (M. Maryono, 2016; Maryono, 1994; Rahayuni, 2014b), which transforms pencak silat as a dynamic representation of performance. When presented as a cultural performance, Pencak Silat becomes a vibrant form of entertainment that draws from traditional arts and culture, offering audiences a glimpse into the rich history and customs of

the regions where it is practiced *ma* (Elang Kusumo & D. M. Lemy, 2021). These performances can be showcased at various ceremonial events, both in regency level or in national and international events. Moreover, Pencak Silat as an art has gained recognition in the competitive section of the latest regulations in International Pencak Silat Federation (PERSILAT), particularly under the category of solo creative performances (IPSI, 2023). This official recognition has further elevated its status as an artistic performance, providing a platform for pencak silat athletes to display their creativity in choreographing series of movements at empty handed and/or while holding weapon, while preserving and promoting their cultural identity (Endang Kumaidah, 2012). Hence, Pencak silat performance also has a cultural relevance of showing the cultural heritage in Indonesia.

This paper is part of the report of a community service which was carried out with the aim of socializing and educating pencak silat as artistic performance for the Indonesian community living in Singapore. The main aim of the community service is to promote pencak silat as a medium to strengthen the national identity of Indonesia in the multicultural site of Singapore. Secondly, teaching pencak silat as a performance might enable Indonesian citizen to promote Indonesian culture in Singapore or in the global world through artistic movements of pencak silat. The community service has been accomplished in October 2023, with months of preparation in advance. The preparation of creating simple movements which could be mastered by beginners involved a series of discussions and practice, in which we reflected that the process has been retrospective or through a series of trial and errors and correcting the movements. The first author contemplated that the process needs to be written and published as it might be relevant and needed for wider audience, and also filling the gaps of literature in artistic dimension of pencak silat.

As defined by a number of academic publications, retrospective analysis is the process of taking a close look at previous practices, events, or data in order to draw conclusions and guide future actions (Voitsekh, 2023). It is a technique that is frequently used to evaluate the efficacy of earlier tactics and results in industries including healthcare, education, and the arts (Soberanes et al., 2019). Retrospective approaches let practitioners to methodically reflect on their prior choices and experiences, allowing them to spot trends, accomplishments, and opportunities for development (Long et al., 2021). In order to continuously improve and adapt in any field, this process of reflection and analysis is necessary. In a similar discussion related to physical movements, Dowse et al. (2017) stress that historical context can be obtained through retrospective investigations, which aids professionals in comprehending how practices

have changed over time and the effects of particular interventions (Dowse et al., 2020). The art of choreography, particularly in the context of martial arts like Pencak Silat, requires a deep understanding of both the physical movements and the cultural philosophies that underpin these practices, as well as the willingness to learn, adopt and crafting something new. A retrospective exploration is essential for creating performances that are not only technically proficient but also culturally authentic performance.

The role of music and movement in Pencak Silat, as well as in other forms of artistic performance, also an essential element when crafting the performance (Galuh Candra Puspita Sari & Matheus Wasi Bantolo, 2020; M. Maryono, 2016). The relationship between music and movement is frequently co-constructed in dance and performance arts, resulting in a dynamic interplay that is essential to the audience's experience (Miller et al., 2022). Similar to this, the choreography of Pencak Silat performances is heavily rely on the rhythmic patterns of the accompanying music, which direct the movements and elevate the entire artistic expression. The music could also be a live performance stands on its own, such as a live gamelan or gendang. Retrospective examination of these components required insightful process about how to improve and integrate all elements of performance in to vibrant, beautiful yet fierce performance that captivated audience. In conclusion, retrospective process may crucial when choreographing Pencak Silat performances.

The fusion of traditional elements with contemporary choreography has been a subject of interest in the field of performance arts. Research on how to incorporate aesthetics traditional elements, such as dance, into contemporary choreography has demonstrated how to innovate within the art form while preserving cultural components (Sitharesmi, 2022). This strategy can be especially helpful for Pencak Silat in preserving the cultural authenticity of the work while making it approachable and captivating for contemporary audiences. In order to keep classic movements fresh and meaningful in modern performances, choreographers might go back and reimagine them using the retrospective process.

However, Pencak silat as an art form often ignored or as the least stands out to be discussed in Indonesia. Especially there have been a large gap of research regarding the methods of choreographing artistic pencak silat as a performance. A good artistic pencak silat performance have to be carefully crafted and planned, which all components of movement, music, formations and position, have to be aligned simultaneously. Each movement have to be meticulously timed to align with the accompanying music. The music itself, usually traditional, might deeply tied to the cultural origins of Pencak Silat, plays a crucial role in setting the tone

and pace of the performance, guiding the performers' movements and enhancing the emotional impact on the audience. This fusion of martial discipline with artistic expression allows Pencak Silat to be appreciated not only as a physical discipline but also as a compelling form of cultural performance. Through these performances, Pencak Silat might become a media to promote cultural traditions while also allowing creative expressions and innovations. However, there is a rarity of published research discussing the process of forming the artistic pencak silat performance; leaving a huge gap in pencak silat literature. This paper tried to fill those gaps by describing the retrospective process of creating artistic pencak silat choreography.

## **METHOD**

Retrospective analysis, as defined in various scholarly works, involves looking back at past events, practices, or data to gain insights and inform future decisions (Hurst, 2023; Steemers et al., 2020; Voitsekh, 2023). Applying a retrospective process to choreography involves systematically reflecting on and analyzing past performances, practices, and creative decisions to inform and improve future work (Hurst, 2023; Steemers et al., 2020; Voitsekh, 2023). Here's how this process can be applied in a structured way:

- 1) Review Past Performances:
  - a) involving documentation: Begin by gathering detailed records of past performances, including video recordings, choreographic notes, rehearsal logs, and feedback from performers and audiences.
  - b) Critical Analysis: review recordings and adding notes to identify what worked well and what didn't. If the rehearsal watched by audience, pay attention to their reactions. Analyse whether the movements and music aligned, including in transitions. Clarity of the narrative or thematic elements or message, implicit or subtle, have to be carefully discussed and reviewed.
  - c) Identify Patterns: Look for recurring strengths and weaknesses in the choreography. This might include technical aspects like timing and synchronization with the music, as well as artistic elements such as emotional expression, types of movements attacking or defending, or other thematic coherence which might be included.
- 2) Reflect on Creative Choices and take feedback in the process:
  - a) Review Choreographic Intentions: Revisit the original intentions behind your choreography. Consider whether the final performance aligned with these intentions or if there were deviations. Reflect on why certain creative choices were made and how they impacted the overall performance.
  - b) Feedback Integration: Consider feedback from dancers, collaborators, and audiences. Reflect on how this feedback could influence future decisions. For example, if a particular section of the choreography was difficult for dancers or did not resonate with the audience, explore ways to adjust or improve it.
- 3) Incorporate Insights into New Work:
  - a) Adaptation and Innovation: Use insights gained from the retrospective analysis

to adapt and refine your choreographic approach. This could involve reworking certain movements, experimenting with new techniques, or rethinking the structure of the choreography. B) Continuous Improvement: Apply the lessons learned to your ongoing choreographic process. For instance, if a retrospective analysis reveals that certain types of movements are more effective at conveying emotion, incorporate more of these movements into your future work. C) Iteration and Testing: Before finalizing new choreography, test it in rehearsals with dancers, and iterate based on observations and feedback. The retrospective process is cyclical, allowing for continuous refinement and improvement. Lastly, 4) Document and Reflect Regularly. A) Ongoing Documentation: Keep detailed records of each stage of the creative process, including decisions made, challenges encountered, and solutions implemented. This documentation will be invaluable for future retrospectives. B) Regular Reflection Sessions: Schedule regular reflection sessions throughout the choreographic process, not just after performances. This allows for real-time adjustments and ensures that the retrospective process is an integral part of your creative practice. Through the methodical implementation of a retrospective process in choreography, it is possible to enhance previous experiences, make constant progress, and produce more sophisticated and powerful creative performances.

## **RESULT**

Pencak Silat choreography is a difficult procedure that calls for striking a careful balance between maintaining the martial art's traditional elements and incorporating new ideas to produce a captivating and visually stunning show. Pencak Silat is firmly anchored in cultural and spiritual traditions, which must be honored and accurately portrayed in the choreography, unlike other dance styles or martial arts. The choreographer's challenge is to maintain the performance's authenticity to Pencak Silat while navigating the complications of fusing these traditional moves with creative expression. Pencak Silat's physical demands—which include precise, fast-paced, and frequently acrobatic movements—also necessitate careful consideration of the actors' talents and the overall safety of the choreography. This increases the complexity even more because the choreographer now has to create sequences that are both technically challenging and safe for the performers to perform without running the danger of harm. Additionally, the choreographer has to make sure that the dance moves are in sync with the music, which can be difficult when using traditional instruments and rhythms that might not fit well in contemporary performance settings. Due to these difficulties, choreographing

Pencak Silat is a difficult and complex process that calls for ingenuity, meticulous attention to detail, and a profound understanding of the art form.

The aim of this paper is to provide how retrospective process can be used to create pencak silat performances. Although we have presented the framework sequence of retrospective process in the method section, after we had done the community service, several lesson will be told and stated. The sequence of making pencak silat choreography could follow these steps: 1) Selecting the Performance's Theme: The subject that will direct the entire creative process is the first stage in choreographing a Pencak Silat performance. The performance's topic serves as the cornerstone, giving everything in it direction and consistency. The topic should speak to the performers as well as the target audience. It can draw inspiration from a variety of places, including historical occurrences, folklore, spiritual ideas, or the natural world. A choreographer can decide to use martial arts to portray a legendary fight, a philosophical concept like the harmony of good and evil, or the beauty of nature. After the topic has been decided upon, it acts as a narrative thread that runs throughout the music, choreography, and overall staging of the show. This thematic focus guarantees that every element of the performance—from the clothing to the movements—contributes to a cohesive artistic expression that communicates to the audience a distinct idea or feeling. 2) Selecting Music for the Pencak Silat Performance: A Pencak Silat performance's tone, rhythm, and flow are all greatly influenced by the music. The next stage after deciding on a theme is to choose or create music that improves and fits the selected subject. The music should express the performance's cultural and emotional connotations in addition to matching the tempo and intensity of the movements. Conventional musical instruments, such the gamelan or kendang, are frequently employed to produce a genuine soundscape that connects the act to its cultural origins. To create a distinct mood or appeal to modern audiences, contemporary or fusion music may also be used, depending on the theme. The interaction between the music and the choreography is essential because the former determines the timing and rhythm of the movements, while the latter interprets and vividly depicts the feelings and narratives that are conveyed through the music. Therefore, in order to guarantee that the music and motions are in perfect sync and maximize the performance's overall impact, meticulous consideration and coordination with musicians or composers are important. 3) The Movement Choreography Development Process: The choreographer starts the laborious process of creating the movement choreography after deciding on a topic and music. In this process, the theme ideas are translated into technically accurate and artistically expressive physical movements.

Incorporating inventive variants that complement the performance's narrative is just as important as paying homage to Pencak Silat's traditional forms and techniques. Whether it is a fast-paced, dramatic sequence of strikes and blocks reflecting a battle scene or a quiet, contemplative sequence indicating inner serenity, every movement is meticulously designed to convey the tale, emotions, and cultural significance of the theme. To make sure that the moves are difficult but doable, the choreography must also consider the performers' physical capabilities and ability levels. In addition, the performers' interactions and spatial arrangements are designed to provide visually captivating compositions that improve the storyline. In order to get the desired impact, movements are tried, modified, and altered during this phase, which frequently entails a great deal of trial and error. The objective is to produce a fluid flow of motion that not only displays the martial art but also enthralls the viewer with its nuanced artistic and narrative quality. 4) Dry run and simulation; The last phase prior to the real show is the simulation and dry run, during which the complete dance is rehearsed in its entirety, frequently incorporating all components—music, costumes, and staging. Rehearsal is essential for resolving any problems and making sure the show goes off without a hitch. In the dry run, the actors rehearse their timing, exchanges, and transitions in settings that are similar to the real show. This aids in their ability to adapt to the dance's flow, the dynamics of the room, and the music's tempo. Additionally, the choreographer uses this time to watch and tweak as needed to enhance the performance as a whole. For better synchronization with the music, for instance, certain gestures might need to be changed, and enhancing visual symmetry might require adjusting the distance between performers.

In addition to helping performers gain confidence and acquaint themselves with the entirety of the performance, the dry run also lessens the possibility of errors occurring during the real event. By the time this phase ends, the performance ought to be polished and prepared for the stage, with every component collaborating to provide a coherent and potent artistic rendering of Pencak Silat. However, even though the actual events may not perfectly as dryrun, the penbcak silat performance that has been displayed in the community service considered as success

## **DISCUSSION**

Choreographing Pencak Silat as an artistic performance can greatly benefit from adapting processes commonly used in dance choreography, as both disciplines share a focus on movement, rhythm, and expression. In dance, the choreography process typically begins with selecting a theme or concept, which serves as the foundation for all creative decisions. This

thematic approach can be applied to Pencak Silat choreography by choosing a narrative or symbolic concept, such as a historical battle or a spiritual journey, which then informs the selection of movements, pacing, and interactions between performers. Moreover, just as dance choreographers meticulously consider the interplay between movement and music, Pencak Silat choreographers can synchronize martial techniques with traditional or contemporary music to enhance the emotional and aesthetic impact of the performance (Long et al., 2021). Additionally, the iterative process of refining movements through rehearsal, common in dance choreography, can be adapted to Pencak Silat to ensure that the physical demands of the martial art are balanced with the artistic intent. By integrating these dance choreography practices, Pencak Silat performances can achieve a more cohesive, expressive, and audience-engaging presentation while maintaining the discipline's cultural integrity (Miller et al., 2022).

Other reflections which come across the process, was that to perform pencak silat choreography, the performers have to have a certain Strength and conditioning ability. Strength and conditioning workouts in advance of the performance are crucial for Pencak Silat artistic performers, just as they are for dancers and other movement-based artists. The art form requires a high level of control and precision in executing complex sequences, which can be likened to the choreographed routines in dance. Research on professional dancers has demonstrated that neuromuscular conditioning can improve motor control, stability, and balance, reducing the risk of injury and enhancing overall performance (Long et al., 2021). The physical demands of Pencak Silat, which combines elements of martial arts, dance, and cultural expression, require a well-rounded approach to fitness. Strength training, in particular, plays a vital role in enhancing the power and effectiveness of movements such as strikes, kicks, and defensive maneuvers. Studies on dancers have shown that targeted strength training can significantly improve lower-body strength and jumping ability, which are directly applicable to the explosive movements often seen in Pencak Silat performances (Ávila-Carvalho et al., 2022). These findings suggest that similar conditioning programs would benefit Pencak Silat practitioners, helping them maintain their form and execute techniques with greater efficiency and safety during performances. By integrating strength and conditioning into their training regimen, Pencak Silat performers can enhance their physical resilience and artistic execution, ensuring that their performances are not only powerful but also sustainable over time.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This paper has describe the idea about utilizing retrospective process in pencak silat choreography. The process and results of actual process has been described and highlighted.



## REFERENCES

- Ávila-Carvalho, L., Conceição, F., Escobar-Álvarez, J. A., Gondra, B., Leite, I., & Rama, L. (2022). The Effect of 16 Weeks of Lower-Limb Strength Training in Jumping Performance of Ballet Dancers. *Frontiers in Physiology*, 12, 774327. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fphys.2021.774327>
- Dowse, R. A., McGuigan, M. R., & Harrison, C. (2020). Effects of a Resistance Training Intervention on Strength, Power, and Performance in Adolescent Dancers. *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, 34(12), 3446–3453. <https://doi.org/10.1519/JSC.0000000000002288>
- Elang Kusumo & D. M. Lemy. (2021). Pengembangan Budaya Pencak Silat Sebagai Atraksi Pariwisata Budaya Di Indonesia (Studi Pada Perguruan Pencak Silat Merpati Putih). *Jurnal Pariwisata Pesona*. <https://doi.org/10.26905/jpp.v6i1.5872>
- Endang Kumaidah. (2012). Penguatan Eksistensi Bangsa Melalui Seni Bela Diri Tradisional Pencak Silat. 16, 5024. <https://doi.org/10.14710/HUMANIKA.16.9>
- Galuh Candra Puspita Sari & Matheus Wasi Bantolo. (2020). Kuda-Kuda Pencak Silat Dalam Penciptaan Tari Ji Karya Galuh Puspita Sari Pada Tahun 2018 Di Gedung Teater Besar Isi Surakarta. 18, 131–139. <https://doi.org/10.33153/grt.v18i2.2869>
- Hurst, P. (2023). Are Dietary Supplements a Gateway to Doping? A Retrospective Survey of Athletes' Substance Use. In *Substance Use and Misuse* (Vol. 58, Issue 3, pp. 365–370). <https://doi.org/10.1080/10826084.2022.2161320>
- IPSI. (2023). Peraturan Pertandingan Pencak Silat. PB IPSI.
- Long, K. L., Milidonis, M. K., Wildermuth, V. L., Kruse, A. N., & Parham, U. T. (2021). The Impact of Dance-Specific Neuromuscular Conditioning and Injury Prevention Training on Motor Control, Stability, Balance, Function and Injury in Professional Ballet Dancers: A Mixed-Methods Quasi-Experimental Study. *International Journal of Sports Physical Therapy*, 16(2). <https://doi.org/10.26603/001c.21150>
- M. Maryono. (2016). Eksistensi Pencak Silat dalam Penciptaan Tari Tradisi Gaya Surakarta. *Greget*. <https://doi.org/10.33153/grt.v9i1.391>
- Maryono, O. (1994). *Pencak Silat Merentang Waktu*. Gramedia.
- Miller, S., Davis, G., & Bowen, S. L. (2022). A musico-choreographic analysis of a Cuban dance routine: A performance-informed approach. *Ethnomusicology Forum*, 31(1), 160–182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17411912.2021.1978305>
- Rahayuni, K. (2014a). *Pencak Silat*. Universitas Negeri Malang.
- Rahayuni, K. (2014b). *Pencak Silat*. Penerbit Universitas Negeri Malang.
- Sitharesmi, R. D. (2022). Exploring Dance Aesthetic in Contemporary Choreography at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. *International Journal of Creative and Arts Studies*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.24821/ijcas.v9i1.6753>
- Soberanes, K. M., Frías, E. C., Baladrán, L. R., Fermán, M. E. R., Méndez, N. M., & Velasco-Bejarano, B. (2019). Banned substances and their incidence: A retrospective view of the national laboratory of prevention and doping control of Mexico; [Sustancias dopantes y su incidencia: Una visión retrospectiva del laboratorio nacional de prevención y control del dopaje de México]. In *Adicciones* (Vol. 31, Issue 3, pp. 201–211). <https://doi.org/10.20882/adicciones.945>

- Steeners, S., van Rijn, R. M., van Middelkoop, M., Bierma-Zeinstra, S. M. A., & Stubbe, J. H. (2020). Health Problems in Conservatoire Students A Retrospective Study Focusing on Playing-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders and Mental Health. *Medical Problems of Performing Artists*, 35(4), 214–220. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.21091/mppa.2020.4029>
- Voitsekh, V. O. (2023). RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE WORD “DIGITALIZATION”. *Business, Economics, Sustainability, Leadership and Innovation*, 9, 4–9. <https://doi.org/10.37659/2663-5070-2022-9-4-9>